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COMPLEMENTS TO *KAZI* LEADERS:
FEMALE ACTIVISTS IN
KAWAIDA-INFLUENCED CULTURAL-NATIONALIST ORGANIZATIONS,
1965-1987

KENJA MCCRAY

Under the Direction of John McMillian, PhD

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the memories and motivations of women who helped mold Pan-African cultural nationalism through challenging, refining, and reshaping organizations influenced by Kawaida, the black liberation philosophy that gave rise to Kwanzaa. This study focuses on female advocates in the Us Organization, Committee for a Unified Newark and the Congress of African People, the East, and Ahidiana. Emphasizing the years 1965 through the mid-to-late 1980s, the work delves into the women's developing sense of racial and gender consciousness against the backdrop of the Black Power Movement.

The study contextualizes recollections of women within the groups' growth and development, ultimately tracing the organizations' weakening, demise, and influence on subsequent generations. It examines female advocates within the larger milieu of the Civil Rights

Movement's retrenchment and the rise of Black Power. The dissertation also considers the impact of resurgent African-American nationalism, global independence movements, concomitant Black Campus, Black Arts, and Black Studies Movements, and the groups' struggles amidst state repression and rising conservatism.

Employing oral history, womanist approaches, and primary documents, this work seeks to increase what is known about female Pan-African cultural nationalists. Scholarly literature and archival sources reflect a dearth of cultural-nationalist women's voices in the historical record. Several organizational histories have included the women's contributions, but do not substantially engage their backgrounds, motives, and reasoning. Although women were initially restricted to "complementary" roles as helpmates, they were important in shaping and sustaining Pan-African cultural nationalist organizations by serving as key actors in food cooperatives, educational programs, mass communications pursuits, community enterprises, and political organizing. As female advocates grappled with sexism in Kwaumba-influenced groups, they also developed literature, programs, and organizations that broadened the cultural-nationalist vision for ending oppression. Women particularly helped reformulate and modernize Pan-African cultural nationalism over time and space by resisting and redefining restrictive gender roles. As such, they left a legacy of "kazi leadership" focused on collectivity, a commitment to performing the sustained work of bringing about black freedom, and centering African and African-descended people's ideas and experiences.

INDEX WORDS: African-American history and culture, Women activists, Black Power, Black nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Servant leadership

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by

KENJA MCCRAY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2017

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2017

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May 2017

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my supportive and loving family. This work is for my husband, Michael A. Foster, who lovingly endured more than any spouse should have to. It is for my daughters Ayodele and Sikudhani Foster-McCray, who sacrificed many days at the museum and park so I could earn this degree. It is for my mother and father, Patricia and Roy, whose high standards laid the foundation for this pursuit. This dissertation is for my grandmother Leola, who was denied any such opportunity due to her race, class, and gender. I offer many thanks to my aunts and uncles as well as my supportive sisters, step-family, in-laws, and cousins. I owe a debt of gratitude, as you looked after my children while I studied and wrote, cheering for me whenever I needed inspiration. I love and cherish you all.

This dissertation is also for the many people who opened their homes, gave their stories, and shared their souls. I submit this document in memory of Queen Nzinga Ratibisha Heru (1947-2011) and all the ancestors who have paved the way for me to be. I finally dedicate this work “to the masses of Blackwomen, my sistuhs, who will also awaken and grow, to defend and develop ourselves, so that we may contribute and create, advancing our race to places and spaces, previously thought unattainable!”¹

¹ Tayari kwa Salaam, *Working Together We Can Make a Change: Towards Sisterhoods of Struggle* (New Orleans: Nkombo, c. 1981), dedication.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I greatly appreciate my advisors John C. McMillian, Jacqueline Rouse, Akinyele Umoja, and Mary G. Rolinson in the Georgia State University (GSU) departments of history and African American Studies. I could never thank you enough for your expertise and patience as I juggled many responsibilities. I would additionally like to thank GSU faculty and staff members Joe Perry, Paula Sorrell, Carolyn Withers, and Robin Jackson for your help and kind words.

To the Atlanta Metropolitan State College (AMSC) administrators and faculty (past and present), thanks for your support as I attempted to matriculate while maintaining a year-round, full-time teaching, advisement, and service schedule. Many thanks go to my colleagues, especially Curtis Todd, Vance Gray, and Harry Asana Akoh who gave the most concrete advice a colleague could ever ask for.

Thanks to my sister-friends, mentors, consultants, and confidantes Antoinette Nozibele Waithe, Ifetayo Ojelade, Yeye Greer Stanford-Randle, Christy Garrison-Harrison, Arika Easely-Houser, and Natanya Duncan. I also appreciate all the formal and informal writing group members I encountered, from Asantewa Sunni-Ali and Keisha Blain to Corliss Heath and Nafeesa Muhammad. I am especially grateful to the Sister Scholars virtual community, which includes AnneMarie Mingo and Cynthia Stewart. I appreciate all the individuals who provided me research and editing assistance, particularly Tony Jamal Lee, Keenya Bradley, and Deborah Striplin.

I have much gratitude for the librarians and archivists who assisted me at Amistad Research Center at Tulane, AMSC, Auburn Avenue, GSU Pullen, and Emory Libraries as well as the University of California Los Angeles Center for African American Studies, Hamline University Archives, and Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center. Thank you so much

Kwasi Konadu, Michael Simanga, and Komozi Woodard for graciously sharing your time, archival materials, connections, and insight. AMSC Vice President Mark Cunningham and the Association of GSU Historians, thank you for research travel funds. To the Association of Black Women's Historians, I greatly appreciate your monetary support and public recognition of my work. I gratefully acknowledge that it took a whole village to make this dissertation a reality.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACBPA	Allegheny County Black Political Assembly
AFS	African Free School
AKA	Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
ALD	Africa Liberation Day
ALSC	African Liberation Support Committee
ASA	African American Students Association
ASCAC	Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations
ASCRIA	African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa
ATA	African American Teachers Association
BART/S	Black Arts Repertory Theater/School
BCD	Black Community Defense and Development
BPP	Black Panther Party
BWG	Black Women's Group
BWUF	Black Women's United Front
CAP	Congress of African People
CDF	Children's Defense Fund
CFUN	Committee for a Unified Newark (also Committee for Unified Newark)
COINTELPRO	Counterintelligence Program
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CUNY	City University of New York
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
EO	Executive Order

FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
IBI	Independent Black Institution
ICWDR	International Committee of Women of the Darker Races
IPE	Institute for Positive Education
LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District
LRS	League of Revolutionary Struggle
LSUNO	Louisiana State University in New Orleans
M-L-M	Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Zedung Thought (also Marxism-Leninism-Maoism)
MMBI	Mary McLeod Bethune Institute
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBA	National Black Assembly
NBUF	National Black United Front
NCNW	National Council of Negro Women
NOI	Nation of Islam
PCC	Pasadena City College
PRIDE	Promotion of Racial Identity, Dignity, and Equality
PWI	Predominantly White Institutions (refers to predominantly-white colleges and universities)
RCL	Revolutionary Communist League
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (also Student National Coordinating Committee)
TWWA	Third World Women's Alliance

UCLA	University of California Los Angeles
UFT	United Federation of Teachers
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
UNO	University of New Orleans
USTI	Urban Survival Training Institute
WATU	Working Always Through Unity

1 INTRODUCTION

During the late 1960s, advocates of the Us Organization of Los Angeles (LA) could leaf through a \$1 booklet to read the pronouncements of the group's chairman, Maulana Karenga. The quotes printed on the pages covered topics ranging from the fundamental nature of "blackness" to the importance of family in the struggle for African American liberation. Karenga's ideas about gender were included in the book and stressed that "a man has to be a leader." The woman's limited roles focused on "inspir[ing] her man," and "educat[ing] their children." According to the *Quotable Karenga*, which was published in 1967, gender equality "is false; it's the devil's concept. Our concept is complimentary [sic]. Complimentary means you complete or make perfect that which is imperfect." During the Us Organization's early years, ideas that emphasized female subordination formed the bedrock of the group's guiding doctrine, which was called Kawaida. Notions of gender inequality, however, would not go uncontested.¹

Female advocates particularly challenged such philosophies as Kawaida doctrine matured, expanded, and influenced other nationalist ideologies during the Black Power era. Kawaida became a guiding influence for activists in groups from New Jersey and New York City to St. Louis and New Orleans. Females were central to the functioning of organizations, particularly when male members were under siege due to intergroup conflict and state efforts to neutralize their activism. Women were also key actors in food cooperatives, educational and training programs, mass communications pursuits, community enterprises, and political organizing. As women grappled with sexism in black-nationalist groups and participated in the larger Black Freedom Struggle, they developed literature, activities, and organizations to address

¹ Clyde Halisi and James Mtume, eds., *The Quotable Karenga* (Los Angeles: US, 1967), 20; The price of the *Quotable Karenga* is from Memorandum, FBI Director to Kansas City Special Agent in Charge, September 12, 1968, Federal Bureau of Investigation, COINTELPRO, Black Extremists and Investigation of the Deacons for Defense and Justice, Part 1.

their issues and to broaden the overall black cultural-nationalist vision for ending oppression.

Women particularly helped reformulate and modernize Kawaida-influenced Pan-African cultural nationalism by “renegotiating” restrictive gender roles.²

By the early 1980s, people who picked up a copy of *Kawaida Theory* could learn that, in addition to complementarity, Karenga now asserted the importance of a “nonsexist” egalitarianism focused on accepting “the equal human and social worth and right” of both men and women.³ Readers could also obtain *Working Together, We Can Make a Change*, a booklet by a female advocate in the Kawaida-influenced Ahidiana organization. *Working Together* was written by Tayari kwa Salaam and focused on gender equality. In the piece, Salaam declared that females were “essential soldiers” in the fight for both black freedom and women’s liberation.⁴

Despite such changes in the literature, pioneering black-feminist scholars Johnetta B. Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall argued that Kawaida Theory was “an unmistakable articulation of male supremacy” almost two decades later.⁵ Notably, the scholars’ 2003 study did not give much voice to females affiliated with Kawaida-influenced, cultural-nationalist organizations, despite the activists’ history of resistance to male chauvinism and the changes they helped bring about in Kawaida-influenced ideology and organizational policy. Although Cole and Guy-Sheftall acknowledged that Karenga’s views had evolved over time, they gave little attention to the women who influenced this change in his thinking. As historian Ashley Farmer has pointed out,

² Ashley Farmer, “Renegotiating the ‘African Woman’: Women’s Cultural Nationalist Theorizing in the Us Organization and the Congress of African People, 1965-1975,” *Black Diaspora Review* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 76.

³ Maulana Karenga, *Kawaida Theory: An Introductory Outline* (Inglewood: Kawaida Publications, 1980), 48.

⁴ Tayari kwa Salaam, *Working Together We Can Make a Change*.

⁵ Johnetta B. Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, eds., *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women’s Equality in African American Communities* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 80.

scholars tend to overlook women's essential roles in refashioning gender (constructs) in Kawaida-influenced organizations because of the doctrine's patriarchal reputation.⁶

The purpose of this study is to contribute to recent historiographies that recover the ideas, motivations, backgrounds, and work of the women who helped shape Kawaida-influenced Pan-African cultural nationalism through redefining their prescribed roles. I argue that women often embodied *kazi* as a rationale for broadening their roles in cultural-nationalism. *Kazi* was a Kawaida principle calling for sustained, vigorous work and study in support of nation building. As such, I assert that female activists in Kawaida-influenced organizations engaged in what I call “*kazi* leadership.” *Kazi* leadership involved women's employment of the concept that the Black Liberation Movement required everyone to work wherever they were capable and needed in performing roles and tasks that breached their gender norms and reconfigured restrictive roles for females within Kawaida-influenced organizations.

1.1 Terminology

Historian Scot Brown explained that black cultural nationalism can be broadly defined as “the view that African Americans possess a distinct aesthetic, sense of values, and communal ethos emerging from either, or both, their contemporary folkways, and continental African heritage.”⁷ African American Studies experts Akinyele Umoja and Charles Jones described cultural nationalism as “an ideological orientation and practice that emphasizes identity, philosophy, customs . . . folklore, holidays, art (e.g. visual, music, and literature), aesthetics,

⁶ Farmer, “Renegotiating the ‘African Woman.’” 76.

⁷ Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 6.

language, and family and community building as a primary vehicle of asserting the integrity and self-determination of a people.” According to Umoja and Jones, Kawaida’s adherents were some of the foremost advocates of the idea that cultural transformation was a necessary precursor to achieving black political power and social change.⁸

Kawaida philosophy was a specific cultural-nationalist form, which Ron Everett (later Maulana Karenga) began to develop in the 1960s to build an African-centered cultural framework that African Americans could use to become liberated from oppression. Karenga interpreted the east African Kiswahili word *kawaida* to mean “tradition and reason.”⁹ However, it literally means “usual thing or customary.”¹⁰ Historian Russell Rickford presented a more critical definition of Kawaida, stating that the doctrine was a product of painstakingly culled African traditions and analysis of African-American realities on the surface; however, it was more a set of quasi-religious principles claiming to show the way to a better way of life. An organizational handbook for workers in The East, a Brooklyn-based cooperative-business, cultural, and educational center, described Kawaida as, “an Ideology, a total value system which interprets Life” and “a framework in which to place all ideas & problems dealing with the community of Black people. [sic]” In other places throughout the manual, East workers were called “advocates of Kawaida.”¹¹

⁸ Akinyele Umoja and Charles Jones, “Black Power Rivals” (unpublished manuscript, 2012), 5, in author’s possession.

⁹ Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) & Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 72.

¹⁰ Kwasi Konadu, *A View from the East: Black Cultural Nationalism and Education in New York City*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press: 2009), 39.

¹¹ Russell Rickford, *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 124; *Mashariki Mfan Ya Kazi Mikono: East Worker’s Manual*, with a forward by Kasisi Yusef Iman, n.d., 3, 4 Martha Bright papers, private collection. CFUN members were also called “advocates.” Michael Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People: History and Memory* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 55.

Kawaida was meant to support organizing efforts during the black liberation struggles of the 1960s. The philosophy emphasized the use of an African-derived ritual, language, and logic to raise awareness and transform and support advocates in the process of challenging European-American and capitalist hegemony. Resistance to “sexual domination” later emerged as a Kawaida goal.¹² Seven ideas called the *Nguzo Saba*, or the Seven Principles of Blackness, comprise the philosophy’s core. They are: unity; self-determination; collective work and responsibility; cooperative economics; purpose; creativity; and faith. Its most widely-known derivative is the celebration known as Kwanzaa.

This dissertation will explore women in Kawaida-influenced Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations. I adopted Rickford’s broad terminology, using the designation “Pan-African” to describe advocates’ common “commitment to linking struggles for freedom and dignity throughout the African continent and diaspora.”¹³ The organizations I will focus on are: Us; Spirit House, Committee for [a] Unified Newark, and the Congress of African People; The East; and Ahidiana. Additional information about each group appears in Table 1.

¹² Maulana Karenga, “Kawaida Philosophy and Practice: Questions of Life and Struggle,” *Sentinel* (Los Angeles), August 2, 2007.

¹³ Rickford defined Pan-Africanism and outlined various forms of Pan-African nationalism, citing “cultural nationalism” as a “[shade] of emphasis” rather than a “fundamental difference” in black-nationalist tendencies. Russell Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 99 & 129.

Table 1. Organizations: Names and Information

Organization Name(s)	Years of Operation	Main Branch	Description
The Us Organization (later New Afroamerican Movement, Kawaida Groundwork Committee, and The Organization Us, and Us)	1965-present	Los Angeles	vanguard cultural- nationalist group; aim was developing a philosophy for self- determined, liberative organizing; name meant “us” (blacks) as opposed to “them” (white people) ¹⁴
Spirit House, Committee for [a] Unified Newark (CFUN), the Congress of African People (CAP)	1967-1976	Newark	community theater and branch Kawaida temple; political action group; united front organization with such affiliates as Pittsburgh CAP, USTI (Philadelphia) & WATU (St. Louis)
The East Organization	1969-1986	New York	cultural and educational center, bookstore, and health food co-op; also housed the Uhuru Sasa School
Ahidiania	1972-1987	New Orleans	bookstore, community center, printing press, school, & study group

¹⁴ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 161. Scot Brown, “The US Organization, Black Power Vanguard Politics, and the United Front Ideal: Los Angeles and Beyond,” *The Black Scholar* 31 (Fall/Winter 2001): 21. Regarding the capitalization of the letter “s” in the organization’s name, I will generally refer to the group as Us for the sake of clarity. However, when quoting, I will maintain the source’s formatting.

“Kawaida-influenced” Pan-African cultural nationalism is a contested category. In the booklet *Kwanzaa: Origin, Concepts*, Maulana Karenga established that, among others, the four groups included in this study were institutions that subscribed to “Kawaida views and values” at some point. In fact, he gave special recognition to what he called “the most viable and durable nationalist organizations shaped in the Kawaida mold.” The East in New York City and Ahidiana in New Orleans were two such groups. “These organizations,” Karenga wrote, “are greatly responsible for the perpetuation and expansion of Kwanzaa through large annual celebrations in their respective cities and through the production of literature, and in the building of institutions around Kawaida principles.”¹⁵ As such, I have included the groups in this study.

In light of informal conversations with various scholars and interviews with advocates, I conclude that there is no common definition for what constituted a Kawaida-influenced organization. Some people particularly disagreed with the idea that Ahidiana was Kawaida-influenced. Certain Ahidiana advocates, however, have asserted that the organization was Kawaida influenced. Their statements further support my choice to include Ahidiana. For instance, former member Michael McMillan wrote, “Ahidiana was guided by the Kawaida philosophy of Maulana Karenga, founder of Us Organization, and creator of the holiday Kwanzaa, whose seven principles (*Nguzo Saba*) are part of Kawaida philosophy.” McMillan further reflected, “[*Kawaida Theory*] was a publication distributed by Ahidiana and sold in its bookstore which inspired me to pursue a degree in psychology, after having dropped out of college.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Maulana Karenga, *Kwanzaa: Origin, Concepts, Practice* (Inglewood, CA: Kawaida Groundwork Committee, 1977), 21.

¹⁶ Amani na Uwezo ya Ukombozi (Michael McMillan), “Reparation for the Descendants of Enslaved Africans: What’s Psychology Got to Do With It?” *Race, Gender, and Class* 18, 1/2 (2011): 111-124. McMillan’s membership in Ahidiana is confirmed in Mtumishi St. Julien, *Upon the Shoulders of Elephants We Reach the Sky: A Parent’s Farewell to a Collegian* (New Orleans: Rungate Press, 1995).

Several East members also weighed in on the topic. Martha Bright stated in her oral history narrative, “The East is a Kawaida organization . . . just like [Committee for a Unified Newark] (CFUN) was, just like Karenga’s Us Organization was and there were other organizations in Chicago and—Detroit and in the South that were Kawaida organizations. . . . The East was absolutely one of the original ones.”¹⁷ Steven “Akili” Walker affiliated with the East through its *Uhuru Sasa* School during his teen years. In his autobiography, Walker wrote that he received the name Akili Hakima at The East, “where we practiced the doctrine of Kawaida.” He went on to explain that the core principles and general appeal of the philosophy attracted him, noting “there were many other organizations around the country following this doctrine.”¹⁸ Statements written in the *East Worker’s Manual* confirm Bright’s and Walker’s assertions about the East’s Kawaida focus. The manual states, “Mashariki (East) is a cultural organization based on Seven (7) Principles . . . We of Mashariki are members of the Kawaida faith. . . . Kawaida is the alternative value system which can free Black people from the materialistic, White, European system of values.”¹⁹

The fact that the groups in this study are “Kawaida-influenced” does not negate their unique qualities or divergences in philosophy and practice. Bright highlighted the groups’ similarities and differences while also expressing the idea that supportive, intergroup networks were just as much a reality as intergroup conflict. “It was a lot of cooperation and there were . . . inter- and intra-organizational rivalries. . . . The way we do things here in Brooklyn was not

¹⁷ Martha Bright, interview with author, Warner Robins, GA, June 24, 2013, part 1 of 2.

¹⁸ Steven Akili Walker with ElizaBeth Felton, *Turn the Horns On* (New York: Wynter-Lynn Publishing, 2011), 21.

¹⁹ *Mashariki Mfan Ya Kazi Mikono*, 1-2.

necessarily the way things were done in Jersey and Chicago and Louisiana and California but there were many commonalities,” Bright stated.²⁰

As with categorizing Kawaia-influenced Pan-African organizations, deciding how to label women’s rights activists and whether to differentiate between feminism and womanism was also a difficult decision. Some advocates defined themselves as feminists, sometimes further defining themselves with such identifiers as “black” and “Third-World.” Other women in my study rejected feminism and deemed it white women’s domain.²¹ Most of the female activists I interviewed preferred to be labeled womanists. According to *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, Alice Walker defined womanism as a shade of black or nonwhite feminism, which is particularly committed to the survival of an entire people (male and female). Additionally, others embraced differing womanisms such as Clenora Hudson-Weems’ Africana womanism. Hudson-Weems’ theory is rooted in black nationalism and emphasizes such key factors as male compatibility, respect for elders, mothering, nurturing, and spirituality.²² In this dissertation, I present varying womanisms and feminisms as specific categories in order to accommodate the multiple paradigms of the involved women and to acknowledge the importance of the process of self-determined naming.

I contextualize the feminist and womanist activists I am studying within the Black Freedom Struggle, which I define as a long movement composed of distinct, but overlapping movements. This definition acknowledges the idea that the Black Freedom Struggle was a long set of endeavors that began with the fight for manumission from chattel bondage in the British

²⁰ Martha Bright, interview with author, Warner Robins, GA, June 24, 2013, part 2 of 2.

²¹ Many (but not all) participants expressed that they felt feminism was tainted by racism and classism in some ways.

²² Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd and Evelyn M. Simien, “What’s in a Name?”: Exploring the Contours of African Womanist Thought,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 27, no. 1 (2006): 69.

North American colonies; however, it also accounts for other characterizations, which point out that the struggle was a movement of movements. That is, several movements ebbed and flowed within the larger framework of the Black Freedom Struggle, which included the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s as well as the reverberations of the movement's grassroots institutions and activism lasting into the 1980s and beyond.

1.2 Invisible and Hypervisible Women²³

Black Power cultural-nationalist masculinism often rendered females invisible within the groups they joined and, in turn, women have existed as shadowy figures in the historical record. Conversely, in the literature, the women were often hypervisible as victims of male chauvinism or helpmates of male icons.²⁴ This section expands on issues of relative marginalization and hypervisibility in the literature. The overall purpose of the dissertation is to add to a body of work that increases the women's visibility and to reveal details about their lives and their thinking to make them present "on their own terms" and situate them within the Long Black

²³ Theories about African-American women's invisibility in movement literature are well developed. For example, journalist Lynne Olson wrote, "The relative invisibility of black women is a problem that persists to this day." Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830-1970* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 16. In a more nuanced assessment of the situation, gender studies theorist, Kimberly Springer made the claim that, along with invisibility, black women suffered from the problem of hypervisibility because of stereotyping. She wrote about black feminists, "monolithic definitions of feminism and black nationalist assertions that feminism was an unviable ideology for black women reinforced black *feminist* invisibility." Neither author, however, addressed cultural-nationalist women in their work. I assert they are among the most invisibilized groups of women in movement literature. Further, where they have been made hypervisible they became victims of chauvinism or were made visible only as auxiliary players in larger organizational histories. In short, cultural-nationalist women were not depicted "on their own terms." Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 88; Leith Mullings, *On Our Own Terms: Race, Class, and Gender in the Lives of African American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1997), xi.

²⁴ Teresa Zackodnik asserted figures such as Amy Jacques Garvey were rarely examined beyond being "helpmeets" of prominent men. I make the claim that the same theory applied to such cultural-nationalist women as Amina Baraka. See Teresa Zackodnik, "Recirculation and Feminist Black Internationalism in Jessie Fauset's 'The Looking Glass' and Amy Jacques Garvey's 'Our Women and What they Think,'" *Modernism, Modernity* 19, iss 3 (437-459), 454.

Freedom Struggle narrative.²⁵ This dissertation in part explores the women's motivations for joining the Freedom Struggle as Pan-African cultural nationalists during the Black Power era and draws attention to similarities with their predecessors. The dissertation also expounds upon ideas put across by historians such as Robyn Spencer—that the historiography about African-American women's political activism has rightfully explored varied forms of resistance to racism, from religion to literary pursuits, yet still marginalizes women with radical tendencies. Contributors such as Spencer, Margo Perkins, and Joy James have fleshed out the details of women's radical resistance within the past two decades. Given the current scholarly treatment of radical women's resistance, the literature often reflects an exploration of revolutionary-nationalist and Civil Rights Movement female agency with fewer details of Pan-African cultural-nationalist women's activist motivations and tactics. Cultural-nationalist women have remained rather obscured in the shadows of Black Power Movement historiography.²⁶

Spencer correctly asserted that the historiography of black nationalism has most often depicted black women in two ways—either as victims of patriarchal black-nationalist men, or as combatants against a racist and classist women's movement. Such accounts have tended to locate Black women's agency in separate movement organizations. Theorists such as Spencer, Dayo Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard have explored women who pushed boundaries within Black Power organizations, but their work, with the exception of *A Nation within a Nation*, has excluded Pan-African cultural-nationalist women. Still, Woodard couched the

²⁵ The phrase “on their own terms” is taken from Leith Mullings' book *On Our Own Terms*. In it, she theorized about African American women, particularly through the lens of personal experience. This phrase was selected because the themes framing this chapter originated in the Black power-era cultural nationalist women's oral history narratives. Mullings, *On Our Own Terms*, xi.

²⁶ Robyn Ceanne Spencer, “Engendering the Black Freedom Struggle: Revolutionary Black Womanhood and the Black Panther Party in the Bay Area, California,” *Journal of Women's History* 20, no.1 (2008): 91; Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000); Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 1999).

women in *A Nation within a Nation* within a larger organizational history, without detailing their individual lives, or reading them as a group with common experiences beyond their institutional affiliations. Moreover, as Gore, Theoharis, and Woodard asserted, biographies of certain trailblazing women have documented their significant work and philosophies, yet such individual stories often spotlight them as exceptions operating in proximity to great men.²⁷ Black Power-era Pan-African cultural-nationalist women, taken as a group facing common struggles and engaging in similar forms of activism, made up a kind of network. Grouping them together allows us to see trends that reveal they were part of a longer tradition of activism inherited from other black female activists of the Long Black Freedom Struggle. It also highlights them as women who negotiated and resisted male chauvinism within Black Power cultural-nationalist organizations, and who sometimes even developed feminist and womanist consciousness.²⁸

Expanding upon these ideas and overlaying them with Scot Brown's assertion that the Us Organization/Black Panther Party (BPP) rivalry shaped movement historiography, I contend that because of these major eliding forces, Pan-African cultural-nationalist females, particularly the ones in Kawaida-influenced organizations, became "invisible women" of sorts.²⁹ They were often depicted as victims of the prevailing male dominance, yet their thinking about it, and the ways they negotiated and resisted the chauvinism, have not been fully explored. In fact, the

²⁷ Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 9.

²⁸ McDuffie forwarded these ideas about Black Left Feminists; however, the concepts also apply to Black Power-era cultural-nationalist women. Eric S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 219.

²⁹ Cheryl Clarke, *"After Mecca": Women Poets and the Black Arts Movement* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 83. Clark wrote "women are invisible" to the predominately-male leadership of Newark's United Brothers.

women were searching for answers to “complicated, multilayered questions.”³⁰ In the vein of Woodard, Brown, and Konadu - all scholars who began including women’s voices in their studies of Black Power Pan-African cultural-nationalist groups - my goal is to help break down the historiographical habit of invisibilizing, stereotyping, and/or marginalizing the females associated with such organizations.

Chapter nine of Gerald Horne’s *Fire This Time* provides a case study of Pan-African cultural-nationalist women’s marginalization in movement historiography. The book is a critical assessment of how cultural nationalism emerged from the Watts Uprising, and the role the ideology played in mid-1960s Los Angeles. Horne’s account of the nascent Us Organization was centered on the activities and ideas of males, particularly Karenga.³¹ Horne’s chapter focused on masculine movement leadership. It is also possible that the tone of the chapter reflected the subject matter, as cultural nationalists were particularly male chauvinistic during the Black Power Movement’s early years by their own admission.

One result of movement masculinism was invisibilizing and silencing cultural-nationalist women involved in Kwaiaida-influenced organizations within the actual movement source materials. Thus, Horne was left with limited options in terms of seeing and hearing women when focusing on archival and other written sources to construct his narrative. The work of mining sources containing information about the lives, ideas, and work of these “undermined” women,

³⁰ Historian, Ula Taylor, made this claim about Black Power activists in general. Her work, however, focused on Black Power-activist women who would affiliate with the Nation of Islam. Ula Taylor, “Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam: Separatism, Regendering, and a Secular Approach to Black Power after Malcolm X (1965-1975),” in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles outside the South, 1940-1980*, eds. Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 186.

³¹ Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 198, 200, 201, 203, & 370. See Brown, *Fighting for Us*, 2 & Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of Leroy Jones* (New York: Freundlich Books, 1984), 252 for an explanation of the name Us, black people, as a counterpoint to “them,” which was a reference to the white oppressors.

however, must be undertaken to discover the females of this particular part of the movement. Further marginalizing Pan-African cultural-nationalist women in the histories of the era will limit an understanding of what actually transpired. Along with Cole and Sheftall's analysis, Horne's understanding of women's involvement in cultural nationalism was confined to a passing reference in the process of explaining the prevalent masculinism of the era. Readers were unable to see or hear from the women.

For example, Horne wrote, "All sides had to 'contend' with black women, who often did not recognize fully that this new burst of militancy and nationalism was pregnant with masculinity that could be misogynist."³² Accurate as the statement might be, readers were told nothing of the black women with whom all sides had to contend. Nor did Horne provide supporting evidence to reflect the voices and ideas of the women, illustrating the gap between the reality of the misogyny they faced, and their possible motivations for participating in such a male-dominated movement within the Black Freedom Struggle. It seems female cultural nationalists could be easily written off as dupes and victims in the historiography. Further investigation, however, reveals the complicated nature of the women's motivations for joining the struggle via Kwaumba-influenced Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations. My aim in the initial chapters of this dissertation is to uncover some of the women's deeper ideas and motivations for joining various Kwaumba-influenced organizations in order to demystify them and place them within the context of Long Black Freedom Struggle historiography.

Horne's statement that some women did not fully realize the problems inherent in the masculinity of Black Power era cultural nationalism has validity. Indeed, some of the women in this study reported being young and less informed at the time they joined the movement than

³² Horne, *Fire This Time*, 186.

they would be in the future. For example, Amina Baraka, who interpreted her developing gender consciousness partially through the lens of growing knowledge about socialism, explained that prior to learning about the ideology, she did not fully possess the intellectual tools for recognizing and framing gender oppression. Socialist conversion factored heavily in the telling of her life story.³³

Baraka often marked time in her narrative by her exposure to socialist ideas. She stated, “In socialism, you’re fighting for equality, one according to its *work* . . . but this [cultural nationalism] was not about one according to its work.” Amina Baraka further stated that joining a Pan-African cultural-nationalist organization “was a very good idea when I was twenty-three, and I didn’t know any better and didn’t know socialism from capitalism or communism from socialism but I do now. But I knew better even when I didn’t . . . understand socialism.”³⁴

Amina Baraka’s statements indicated that, although she did not know when she was younger what she would later learn about intersecting forms of oppression, neither did she come to the movement an empty vessel. Her statements spoke to the complex nature of Pan-African cultural-nationalist women’s stories. Baraka came to the struggle with a sense of self shaped by her upbringing, environment, and prior movement affiliations. She reported that she was an activist-artist in Newark before her second husband, Amiri, returned to the city in 1965 as the preeminent Black Arts figure.³⁵ Her narrative also told the story of a resilient woman nurtured by

³³ McDuffie pointed out this a trend in the self-narratives of black Left women from the first half of the 20th century. He wrote that they tended to remember socialist conversion as the key turning point in their lives, with subsequent actions framed by the story of the Communist Party. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, 24.

³⁴ Amina Baraka, interview with author, Newark, NJ, July 17, 2012.

³⁵ In his autobiography, Amiri described Amina, then Sylvia Wilson, as someone who “fascinated” him. He reported she was “one of the initiators of the Jazz Arts Society,” a group aimed at bringing innovative art to Newark. He wrote, “Her own cultural work was in and around Newark, against much heavier odds [than in New York City]. But it was hooked up objectively to the same kind of thing we were doing at the Black Arts. . . . And so she had a whole life as a cultural worker in Newark that we were trying to do at the Black Arts.” He went on to explain the

other strong women who, she said, instilled in her an ethos of self-preservation and self-respect.³⁶

Amina Baraka was a capable person who came into a greater level of consciousness through her contact with certain nationalist ideas and practices. For instance, nationalist literacy practices exposed some of the activists to the very socialist ideas that would transform their gender consciousness over time.³⁷ In other words, Amina Baraka's story illustrated she was not a dupe, nor was she as invisible in reality as she and her counterparts have become in the historiography of the era. She was one of the many women with whom the men had to "contend" according to Gerald Horne's description.

1.3 Historiography and Context

A body of work about Kwaiaida-influenced organizations has been developing for greater than thirty-five years and the literature reflects the complex reality of women's roles therein. The first published history of Kwaiaida organizations appeared in the 1980s. The piece was about the Congress of African People (CAP) and it appeared in *Forward*, the journal of the League of

significance of Amina's work and how she inspired him, stating that "art was literally lifeblood in a place like Newark." He wrote that artists and their advocates like Amina who worked and lived in places like Newark were "dedicated valuable people" because of their focus and responsibility to working-class African Americans. He further explained that he took inspiration from such artist/activists as Amina, indicating that their commitment to the black working class was a quality he was seeking to acquire at the time. Baraka, *Autobiography*, 230, 238-239; For more about the Amina Baraka's grassroots organizing see Komozi Woodard, "Message from the Grassroots: The Black Power Experiment in Newark, New Jersey," in *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America*, eds. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 77-96.

³⁶ Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

³⁷ Fisher introduced the idea that practices the East Organization sponsored such as the *Black News* periodical, poetry readings, and a bookstore fostered important literacy habits. This dissertation extends her thesis to include several Kwaiaida-influenced organizations and makes the claim such literacy practices nurtured the growth of feminist and womanist consciousness among some cultural-nationalist women. Maisha T. Fisher, *Black Literate Lives: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 6-7.

Revolutionary Struggle (LRS).³⁸ The 1980s also witnessed the rise of black feminisms and womanisms. Two female-focused themes emerged in Kawaïda-informed literature during this period. The first treated women's experiences as a part of larger organizational histories or men's biographies and autobiographies. A second motif encompassed more direct commentary on gender roles in the form of book chapters, essays, and journal articles. In the books, the authors provided a balanced view of women's experiences within Pan-African cultural nationalism and Black Power. In the articles, writers continued the work of defining, expanding, revising, and critiquing women's roles in the Kawaïda philosophical framework. Most of the works reflected the authors' contextualization of women's experiences with at least a limited consideration for black feminist, womanist, or Africana womanist ideologies. Moreover, debates emerged in the literature around women's roles within the struggle, with some writers criticizing Kawaïda for producing and perpetuating chauvinist rhetoric and rituals. Kawaïda's advocates also responded to critiques with rebuttals, philosophical revisions, or clarifications in the literature.

A purpose of this study is to build upon the historiography about Pan-African cultural nationalism and Kawaïda in two ways. First, I highlight women's images and roles by tying together several organizations with the connecting "thread" of Kawaïda influence. Second, as Kawaïda literature is a part of the historiography about Black Power and the Black Freedom Struggle at large, I hope to add to the discussion of women's roles within the Black Power Movement and the Long Black Freedom Struggle by broadening the literature to address radical women who: a) were associated with organizations beyond the BPP, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), or SNCC-derived groups such as the Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA); b) may not have achieved iconic status as Black Power revolutionaries, but

³⁸ Michael Simanga, "The Congress of African People (1970-1980): History and Memory of an Ideological Journey" (Ph.D. diss., Union Institute and University, 2008), 177.

who were integral to the functioning of key Black Power-era organizations and to the broadening of Kawaïda philosophy's scope; and c) whose work, though within the context of 1960s and 1970s black cultural nationalism, shared common ideas, motivations, and experiences with other twentieth-century female Black Freedom Struggle figures from lay historian Drusilla Dunjee Houston to civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer.

A certain segment of the literature treats women's activities as a part of greater organizational histories or of men's narratives. I hope to expand the historiography, because in subsuming women's images and experiences within broader histories, females' contributions have not received the amount of attention they deserve. Amiri Baraka, in *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (1984), Komozi Woodard, in *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) & Black Power Politics* (1999), Scot Brown in *Fighting for Us* (2003), Kwasi Konadu in *A View from the East: Black Cultural Nationalism and Education in New York City* (2009), and Michael Simanga in *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People: History and Memory* (2014) considered the women in the context of biographies of prominent Kawaïda leaders or in writing about broader organizational histories. The same was true of Woodard's chapter titled "Imamu Baraka, the Newark Congress of African People, and Black Power Politics," and Floyd W. Hayes III and Judson L. Jeffries' piece, "*Us* Does Not Stand for United Slaves!" in the book *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* (2006).

Both Woodard and Simanga explored Baraka's Black Power political organizing. *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People* focused on CAP and its top leader, particularly through the lens of the Simanga's own experiences as a group member. It should be noted that instead of producing a broad narrative of Baraka's life, Woodard and Simanga's work reflected the imprint of women's activism both at the level of the leadership and the rank-and-file

members. The authors took care to interweave women's histories throughout their accounts. They also devoted short sections to women's organizing and institution-building efforts, especially highlighting female advocates' complicated struggle to bring issues about what they viewed as women's threefold oppression to the center of Black Power. Woodard took care to point out that the Black Women's United Front, spearheaded by Amiri's wife Amina, influenced cultural nationalists including Karenga to take note of women's issues. Simanga emphasized that women were instrumental in the ideological, organizational, and programming functions of the various CAP affiliates.³⁹

In his account of the Us Organization, Scot Brown integrated women, called the *Mumininas*, into his narrative, highlighting their struggles as well as the places where they were able to assert themselves within the organization.⁴⁰ He focused on the period after they formed the *Matamba*, a women's paramilitary unit.⁴¹ Brown uses oral history and foregrounds women's voices. This practice enables readers to gain a clearer sense of female advocates' contributions as well as their struggles, and speaks to the importance of his seminal text on Us. Historian Kwasi Konadu's *A View from the East: Black Cultural Nationalism and Education in New York City* can also be added to the group of organizational histories written about Kawaida-influenced

³⁹ Michael Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People: History and Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 80.

⁴⁰ Brown, stated the Mumininas were the "women of Us," *Fighting for US*, 163. Muminina means "true believers" in Kiswahili. Specifically, the Mumininas were women who were committed adherents in Kawaidist organizations. They were above the Malaikas or the young female's group in rank and age. Jamala Rogers, interview with author, Atlanta, GA, October, 5, 2012.

⁴¹ The *Matamba* was a women's group mobilized for paramilitary functions in Us during the early 1970s. The group was named after an African nation led by Queen Nzingha (also Nzinga and Njinga) during the 1600s. Brown, 123. John K. Thornton, "Legitimacy and Political Power: Queen Njinga, 1624-1663," *The Journal of African History* 32 (1991): 25.

organizations.⁴² Konadu provides a history of New York's East organization, exploring advocates' particular use of Kawaida philosophy to forge their own approaches to resistance in the areas of entrepreneurship, education, and the arts. Konadu explains The East's origins in the struggle over community control of schools, the challenges the group faced in terms of continuity and survival, the group's decline, and its legacy. Like Woodard and Brown, Konadu treats women's activism as part of the overall history of The East organization.

In his autobiography, Amiri Baraka wove his reflections on women into musings about his life. He covered topics ranging from male chauvinism in his personal relationships with women, to more general gender issues, such as polygamy. His observations were insightful, providing candid assessments of women's gender roles in the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School (BART/S), CFUN, CAP, and more. For example, he explained in detail how Amina Baraka conceived ideas and implemented programs such as the African Free School's parents' group or its twenty-four-hour daycare program. Both programs were open and made affordable for families in the inner-city neighborhood where they were located.⁴³ Baraka deftly summed up his opinion about women's roles by writing, "the women in those 60's and early 70's black nationalist organizations . . . had to put up with a great deal of unadulterated bullshit in the name of revolution."⁴⁴ However, despite such incisive commentary, no woman's voice can be directly heard in Baraka's autobiography. All the information about women is filtered through

⁴² *A View from the East* was the second edition of Konadu's *Truth Crushed to the Earth Will Rise Again!: The East Organization and the Principles and Practice of Black Nationalist Development* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005).

⁴³ Komozi Woodard, email message to the author, December 16, 2012.

⁴⁴ Baraka, *Autobiography*, 300-301; A similar discourse exists about women's gender roles in black cultural nationalist and New Left organizations. Members of the New Left called the same types of underappreciated tasks (routine office jobs, cooking, and cleaning) "shit work." John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19.

the lens of his own understanding. His memoirs are, of course, by nature focused on his own perceptions.

My study foregrounds the women's recollections with womanist methods in mind. Men's remembrances are, therefore, included. I assert that women's roles across the various organizations must be explored in a full-length study in order to develop a clearer picture of the ways the philosophy shaped their experiences, how the women molded the philosophy, and the roles females played as activists and leaders in Kawaida-influenced organizations.⁴⁵ Making women the focus of the study, while also including men, allows an explication of the places where they found agency and allows readers to see the women beyond their auxiliary roles in male-dominated stories.

The literature on Kawaida-influenced organizations also reflected a grouping of essays and book chapters and excerpts which centered gender issues. In "Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse and African-American Nationalism," E. Frances White critiqued Maulana Karenga's ideas about women from a feminist perspective. White deconstructed the chauvinistic elements, placing them within the framework of black nationalism, and highlighting the point at which Karenga began to change his ideology about women's gender roles. My study builds upon this line of inquiry, but broadens its reach by incorporating more voices of people who were in Kawaida-influenced Pan-African cultural-nationalist groups as opposed to simply looking at Karenga's writings. Kawaida ideas, by design, were meant for the people. Kawaida advocates syncretized the philosophy as it grew in popularity.⁴⁶ Scholarly studies of the theory should, thus, deal with Maulana Karenga's writings as well as those of other people who believed in Kawaida-

⁴⁵ Joseph called for a "full length historical study of Black Panther women" in "Black Liberation without Apology," 9. Likewise, I believe there is a need for the same kind of study for women in cultural nationalist organizations.

⁴⁶ Syncretism denotes the combining of various forms or belief or practice.

inflected ideologies, adopted them to shape and support their own struggles, and enacted them based on their own interpretations and needs.

Additionally, some literature that mentioned Kawaida tended to overlook the voices of the involved women, suggesting narratives that are limited to male-dominated Black Power juxtaposed in direct conflict with the women's liberation movement. As previously mentioned, Cole and Guy-Sheftall's *Gender Talk* did not include many Kawaida-oriented cultural-nationalist women's voices. In chapter three, revealingly titled "Collisions: Black Liberation Versus Women's Liberation," the authors cited Kawaida ideology, along with the doctrine's prime theorists and publicists, Maulana Karenga and Amiri Baraka, as particularly chauvinistic. Sheftall and Cole went on to quote notable Civil Rights and Black Power activists' and thinkers' recollections of the masculinist 1960s; however, beyond Sonia Sanchez, the authors did not cite women involved in Kawaida-influenced organizations.

It is worth mentioning that there are no specific archives focused on sources that reflect women's experiences in Kawaida-influenced organizations, a fact which underscores the importance of this study. While conducting research for this dissertation project, I found a paucity of archival sources and no biographies centering the women involved in Kawaida-influenced organizations. There is a growing body of secondary sources in which scholars mention women in such organizations. Only one of these secondary sources existed prior to the date of publication for *Gender Talk* in 2003.

Despite recent scholars' efforts to present new information about black women's influence on the Black Power Movement, still more research is needed to deepen our knowledge of women who were in the various organizations that incorporated some forms of Kawaida philosophy as guiding principles. This critique is by no means an attempt to erase male

chauvinism from the history of Kwaaida-influenced cultural nationalism. The purpose of this project is to present a fuller picture, noting change over time and space as well as women's integral roles in the Kwaaida-influenced groups of my study.⁴⁷

Several essays responded to scholarly treatments of Kwaaida adherents' philosophies and practices such as "Africa on My Mind" and *Gender Talk*. Karenga overtly pushed back against what he called White's "limited and limiting" focus on Kwaaida adherents' chauvinism and he assessed his ideas on gender roles in Kwaaida in "Us, Kwaaida and the Black Liberation Movement" (2007). In the essay, he admitted that male chauvinism limited women's roles; he also pointed to instances where "the women of Us carved out spaces of meaning and power within the organization, even in the early years."⁴⁸ Although Karenga supported his argument about women's agency by citing such documents as unpublished speeches and conference papers female Us members have written, the more accessible published documents emanating from Kwaaida adherents did not reflect the words of the masses of Us participants, particularly those who were females.

The discourse about women and Kwaaida has become more complex in recent years. Karenga's published article, "The Oshun Question and Quest: Uplifting Women and the World" (2007) tackled the issue of clearly defining Kwaaida adherents' philosophy as embracing of women's right to reach their full potential and men's responsibility to support them in doing so. Moreover, articles published in the spring 2012 *Western Journal of Black Studies* reflected more varied opinions on the topic of Kwaaida and women. Those articles are "Kwaaida Womanism,

⁴⁷ Cole and Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk*, 2003, 79-80.

⁴⁸ Maulana Karenga, "US, Kwaaida and the Black Liberation Movement in the 1960s: Culture, Knowledge and Struggle," in *Engines of the Black Power Movement: Essays on the Influence of Civil Rights actions, Arts, and Islam*, ed. James L. Conyers, Jr. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2007), 123.

African Ways of Being Woman in the World” by Maulana’s wife, Tiamoyo Karenga, and Chimbuko Tembo and “Grounding Kawaïda Womanism: A Sankofa Reading of Ancient Sources” by Maulana Karenga himself. I seek to explore factors influencing changes made in terms of the way women’s roles within Kawaïda were discussed. Certain modes of discourse about women have changed in key ways over time but others have remained the same.⁴⁹

Some of the most salient examples of statements that vigilantly engaged the issue of addressing gender in Kawaïda adherents’ philosophies appeared in relationship to the 1995 Million Man March. Maulana Karenga wrote the March’s mission statement, bringing Kawaïda philosophy to bear on the discourse about the event. Notably the statement published in *Million Man March/Day of Absence: A Commemorative Anthology* reflected female activists’ imprint, as it states, “we self-consciously emphasize the **priority need** of Black men to stand up and assume this new and expanded responsibility without denying or minimizing the equal rights, role and responsibility of Black women in the life and struggle of our people.”⁵⁰

Other essays in *Million Man March/Day of Absence* similarly addressed gender issues and highlighted diverse voices. Tiamoyo Karenga contributed a piece, placing Kawaïda doctrine at the forefront of her commentary, revisiting and broadening the concept of complementarity. She implies that the concept of complementarity does not mean incompleteness or diminishing the status for women. Writing that the Mission Statement was “important from a Kawaïda standpoint because it . . . continued the historical legacy of mutual support of Black men and

⁴⁹ E. Frances White acknowledged Maulana Karenga “significantly modified his sexist ideas about gender relations” however, as White and many other scholars have pointed out, the ideologies of complementarity and collective family persisting in Kawaïda philosophy and practice still “work against the liberation of black women.” *Africa on My Mind*, 75.

⁵⁰ Maulana Karenga, “The Million Man March/Day of Absence Mission Statement,” in *Million Man March/Day of Absence: A Commemorative Anthology*, ed. Haki R. Madhubuti and Maulana Karenga (Chicago: Third World Press, 1996), 141. The emphasis in the quote is Karenga’s.

women in love, life and struggle,” she updated the discussion of gender roles in the philosophy and in the larger struggle for African American empowerment. Moreover, she suggested that women’s active resistance to chauvinism was brought to bear on the male-centered nature of the Million Man March. She explained that initially Minister Louis Farrakhan indicated that women should be excluded, but claimed that Us members assisted with procuring women’s full participation.⁵¹ This statement solidified the idea that women’s activism in Kawaida has influenced the tone and the direction of African American nationalist organizing efforts.

Tiamoyo Karenga’s assertion represents the state of Kawaida adherents’ gender discourse in the environment of black feminist, womanist, and Africana womanist ideologies. However, I contend that Kawaida adherents who are writing in the current context should be careful to maintain an accurate account of the historical realities of gender roles. The history of male-supremacist ideas should never be erased. To the contrary, it is important to continue presenting balanced yet problematized histories of women’s encounters within Kawaida, cultural nationalism, and the Black Power Movement. Some theorists who had once been in Kawaida-influenced organizations still challenged the Million Man March as having fallen short of fundamentally addressing women’s and larger community issues in concrete ways.⁵²

⁵¹ Tiamoyo Karenga, “A Time of Possibility: Continuing the Historical Legacy,” in *Million Man March/Day of Absence: A Commemorative Anthology*, ed. Haki R. Madhubuti and Maulana Karenga (Chicago: Third World Press, 1996), 75.

⁵² Hanes Walton, Jr., “Public Policy Responses to the Million Man March,” *Black Scholar* 25, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 19. The grassroots-organized Million Woman March took place in fall 1997, two years after the 1995 Nation of Islam-sponsored event for men. Both marches proved to be symbolically affirming but neither posed major challenges to the multiple forms of oppression African Americans faced. Despite the fact that *Ebony* magazine reported that NOI head minister Louis Farrakhan cited women’s wisdom, power, and intelligence, affirming that they should not be subordinated to men as leaders. The *New York Times* conversely noted that the message at the 2015 twentieth anniversary Million Man March was “fundamentally conservative and blatantly sexist.” Jamilah Lemieux, “Farrakhan Speaks. Again,” *Ebony*, October 1, 2015, 99; Charles M. Blow, “Million Man March, 20 Years On,” *New York Times (Online)*, October 11, 2015.

In *Million Man March/Day of Absence: A Commemorative Anthology*, Ahidiana founder Kalamu Ya Salaam provided a critique of the “virulent sexism of the Black Power movement” as accepted by both men and women. He charged the event represented an act of “marching backward” because it omitted the important issues of “healthcare, childcare, battering and rape, environmental concerns and other issues which aren’t usually on men’s minds when we talk about the problems of ‘the community.’”⁵³ Kalamu ya Salaam’s ideas provide support for my previous assertion that Kawaïda adherents’ rhetoric and deeds must be balanced. For example, Salaam stressed the Million Man March did not propose any solid solutions to structural problems African American communities have faced. He ended with the contention that no real movement can exist if the leadership remains male dominated and excludes the female majority. His argument raised important issues that should continue to be foregrounded in treatments of black nationalism and Black Power. A perennial question is whether the revised rhetoric about gender and black nationalism has resulted in any significant long-term changes.

Recent scholarly studies begin to address the issues of Pan-African cultural nationalism, women’s activism, and change. Ashley Farmer explains how women’s theorizing helped construct more progressive gender mandates in terms of organizational policy and Kawaïda ideology in the article titled, “Renegotiating the ‘African Woman’: Women’s Cultural Nationalist Theorizing in the Us Organization and the Congress of African People, 1965-1975” (2014). Russell Rickford infuses *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination* with women’s histories. His book-length study of the Pan-African nationalist educational institutions emanating from the Black Power Movement chronicles black liberation schools, highlighting women’s central contributions to the

⁵³ Kalamu Ya Salaam, “A Million is Just a Beginning,” in *Million Man March/Day of Absence: A Commemorative Anthology*, ed. Haki R. Madhubuti and Maulana Karenga (Chicago: Third World Press, 1996), 110.

development and administration of black-nationalist independent and supplementary institutions, even as they both resisted and advanced masculinism.⁵⁴ Both studies are intellectual histories. While Farmer's sole focus is women in Us and CAP, Rickford explores a myriad of Pan-African nationalist formations, centering his work on their educational pursuits. This dissertation, however, primarily uses oral history methods to present a broad study of Kawaïda-influenced Pan-African cultural-nationalists women's backgrounds and motivations, focusing on women affiliated with Us, CAP, Ahidiana, and The East, and treating their advocacy in multiple realms, from the press to educational programs. The overall aim is to illuminate the backgrounds and motivations of women in Kawaïda-influenced Pan-African cultural-nationalist organization and illustrate their paths from complements to *kazi* leaders.

1.4 Overview of Chapters

“NOBODY KNOWS OUR NAMES”: PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL-NATIONALIST WOMEN'S MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE

This chapter discusses specific women's motivations for joining the Black Freedom Struggle and explores some of their similarities with other activists involved in earlier phases of the struggle. Female activists in Kawaïda-influenced organizations descended from many impulses within the struggle for black freedom from classical nationalism to radical ideologies. The women were not anomalous for participating in Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations, but their motivations arose from their origins in vindicationist ideological traditions, and from sentiments nurtured within family households influenced by the likes of

⁵⁴ For more information, see Kenja McCray, review of *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination*, by Russell Rickford, *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 9, no 2 (2016): 276-278.

labor-movement organizers and Garveyites. They were not dupes. In many ways, they bore the marks of the “efficient women” and “community feminists” from previous generations.

“BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS . . . ROLLED STRONG”: HOW THE 1960S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CLIMATE SHAPED PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL-NATIONALIST WOMEN’S ACTIVIST MOTIVATIONS

This chapter addresses the way the political and social climate in 1960s America shaped the worldview of women who would eventually join Kawaïda-influenced Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations. The Nation of Islam (NOI) and Malcolm X, and the uprisings of the “Long, Hot Summers” shaped the women’s outlook. Their perspectives were not alien but fell on a continuum of other forms of activism, from Civil Rights Movement protest to earlier versions of modern black nationalism.

“I COULD NOT SIT BACK . . . AND OPT OUT”: PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL-NATIONALIST WOMEN’S BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE NARRATIVES AND WAYS OF BEING IN THE WORLD

Born during in the years between World War II and the Cuban Revolution, the women involved in this study discussed coming of age in an era of rapid change. Global independence struggles molded their black-nationalist sensibilities, from their organizational affiliations to their sense of personal style. Various African and diaspora movements for independence and equality shaped their convictions, inspiring certain women to join the Black Freedom Struggle via neighborhood cultural-nationalist organizations and energizing others to take to the streets in protest against South Africa’s apartheid policies. Moreover, pronouncements of females’ equal status in conflicts like the Chinese Communist Revolution particularly affected discourse and modernized policy related to women’s roles in the movement. Moved by the spirit of the times, the women’s sensibilities about being in the world were transformed as they came to identify

with global politics, African-influenced aesthetics, and developed a swaggering sense of black pride.

“EDUCATION DIDN’T MEAN A DEGREE, IT [MEANT] HOW WE SERVE[D] OUR RACE AND ALL HUMANITY”: CAMPUS/COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The history of Black Power activists’ emphasis on the importance of social duty, particularly in terms of doing away with racism in higher education, is well documented. While many historians of the Black Campus Movement note the significance of campus activism during the late 1960s and early 1970s in propelling the Black Studies Movement, and helping establish the field in institutions of higher education, extending our knowledge of female black nationalists of the era requires a closer look at the connections between students and the communities they served. In various regions across the country, in high school, community colleges, or four-year institutions, women who joined Kawaïda-influenced organizations often developed inclinations for cultural-nationalist activism through the Black Campus and Black Studies Movements. They also enacted important tenets of these movements in helping develop and sustain neighborhood institution as spaces for acquiring knowledge outside the ivory tower.

“AGITATE. EDUCATE. ORGANIZE.”: WOMEN IN *KAWAÏDA*-INFLUENCED NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS, THE PRESS, AND PROTEST POLITICS

This chapter chronicles women who affiliated with Kawaïda-influenced organizations because of their involvement in neighborhood programs and protests. The section is focused on the women’s efforts via political organizing, consciousness raising, direct action, education, print media, and nation building by way of public institutions and household development. Various elements, including the concept of *kazi* or vigorous, sustained work, influenced their approaches to activism. Some female activists became involved in the Black Freedom Struggle seeking to

take responsibility for the well-being of their communities in the context of urban crisis. Many eventually began to lodge challenges to gender-based restrictions both inside and outside of cultural-nationalist organizations. As a result of their work within black-nationalist organizations, women developed valuable skills and abilities. Many developed into leaders in their own right whether or not such activities were formally acknowledged.

“TAIFA SAA MEANS NATION TIME”: WOMEN, *KAWAIDA* INFLUENCED, NATIONALIST INSTITUTION BUILDING, AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The women’s oral narratives collected for this dissertation project reflected their essential roles in nation building from the earliest stages of planning and development to the routine sustenance of nationalist institutions and programs. The chapter highlights the importance of the women’s efforts while also discussing instances of how women in *Kawaida*-influenced organizations often worked within standard gender roles. Additionally, accounts such as those of the advocates involved in Ahidiana’s sisterhood gatherings reflected the idea that certain female cultural nationalists actively reshaped gendered notions about nation building to support the work that they saw as integral to community welfare and important to what they viewed as African Americans’ common fate.

“TO BUILD OUR NATION . . . TEACH OUR CHILDREN!”: FEMALES’ GENDER ROLES IN INDEPENDENT AND SUPPLEMENTARY BLACK EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

This part of the dissertation reflects on females’ roles in the Independent and Supplementary Black Institutions of Us, Committee for a Unified Newark and the Congress of African People, The East, and Ahidiana. These organizations originally rested on a philosophy that constrained women’s gender roles to home, education, and supporting males’ agendas. As a result, educational institutions served as important sites of women’s political work within such a

context. Although advocates often envisioned womanhood within Kawaïda-influenced groups as a specifically African-diasporic identity, Pan-African cultural-nationalist beliefs about women's gender roles also resembled mainstream American Early National Period Republican Motherhood ideology. The majority-female body of teachers within Kawaïda-influenced Independent Black Institutions (IBIs) was central to the process of developing citizens in the incipient nation much like Republican Mothers. Additionally, Pan-African cultural-nationalist women leveraged their access to the education, training, and leadership opportunities to transcend their designated gender roles. The women employed key Kawaïda values like *kazi* as educators in order to organize programs such as communal child care, which aided advocates in conducting political work beyond the bounds of their domestic duties.

CONCLUSION: *KAZI* LIKE YOU MEAN IT”: *KAZI* LEADERSHIP LESSONS IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

The dissertation conclusion addresses the fact that I developed an interest in the topic of Pan-African cultural-nationalist women through my own experiences with 1990s Afrocentrism as well as a rites of passage program, which was aimed at developing and instilling “African Womanhood” in college-age black women. I also express the importance of knowing more about past activism for today's young people who are protesting and organizing in the current political climate. I discuss important lessons of the past, including fundamental elements of *kazi* leadership. I also provide an overview of decline, and explore positive movement outcomes. Finally, I outline some of the limitations of the study and propose areas of further study.

2 “NOBODY KNOWS OUR NAMES”: PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL-NATIONALIST WOMEN’S MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE¹

On a balmy summer day, Amina Baraka sat on the stoop of her home recounting days spent as an activist and organizer during the Black Power Movement. Her silvery-gray hair blew in the mild breeze. Mostly, she spoke of her time in CFUN and CAP in a strong, confident voice. Occasionally, however, undertones of disappointment tinged her story. The dismay was sometimes subtle but at other times it blared louder than the sirens whizzing by the tree-lined Newark street where she lived. Recalling details of the work she and other women performed to help organize the 1972 National Black Political Convention, she punctuated her list with the following statement, “I mean we were there. But nobody—like Jimmy Baldwin’s book—nobody knows our names. And that is haunting me and the reason I’m giving this interview.”² This dissertation chapter adds to the body of work that seeks to counteract Amina Baraka’s concerns that female activists who were in Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations such as CFUN and CAP have been marginalized in the story of the Black Freedom Struggle and begins to uncover some of their motivations for joining the Black Freedom Struggle. The chapter is also meant to highlight the fact that their similarities with activists involved in earlier phases of the struggle place them on a continuum within the Freedom Struggle.

2.1 *Race Women*

I will explore continuities between the cultural-nationalist women and elements of previous movements. Pulling themes from their interviews, the chapter focuses on “race first” ideology, vindicationism, migration, civil rights, labor, community movement work,

¹ Amina Baraka, interview by author, Newark, NJ, July 12, 2012.

² Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

internationalism, and Leftist ideology. The overall goal is illuminating more of their motivations and influences to show that, although male chauvinism did impact the women, they were also more than the images scholars have constructed based on their larger context. Listening to their voices as an act of *seeing these cultural-nationalist women*, will reveal more about their personal motivations and show they were multifaceted people who were similar to their predecessors.

In the anthology about radical women in the Black Freedom Struggle, *Want to Start a Revolution?*, the editors stressed the importance of challenging the notion that Black women believed they had to select race over gender in enacting their freedom dreams.³ The nationalist women involved in this study gave a variety of reasons for joining the struggle. Yet, in the context of the 1960s, a decade witnessing the release of the controversial Moynihan Report, which pathologized black women as emasculating matriarchs, a race-first paradigm motivated certain activists to join cultural-nationalist groups.⁴ Women's studies expert Beverly Guy Sheftall summed up a prevalent feeling in the black community, even into the 1970s, with the following statement. "Feminism was a dirty word . . . The assumption was that racism was the predominant 'ism.'"⁵

It is important to remember many of the women involved in the Black Power-era cultural nationalism came into their gender consciousness over time. Former Ahidiana member Anoa Nantambu stated the following about her early race-based motivations for joining the struggle and how her gender-consciousness developed later: "It was only gradual awareness . . . because I

³ Gore, Theoharis, and Woodard, *Want to start a Revolution?*, 6.

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management," accessed March 28, 2010, <http://www.dol.gov/dol/aboutdol/history/webid-meynihan.htm>.

⁵ Beverly Guy Sheftall interview, *Makers: Pioneer of Black Women Studies*, accessed September 13, 2013, <http://www.makers.com/beverly-guy-sheftall>.

didn't have a notion that I couldn't go to any school until . . . I saw that written across the [news]paper, "Whites Do Not Want Blacks at—" Nantambu said, abruptly ending the statement. She continued, "I didn't have that sense of awareness about I couldn't go somewhere, so that was like an affront. . . . I had not had that kind of affront to my femininity." Explaining that her gender consciousness developed within the context of her Black Power activism, she stated, "The liberation aspect of my evolving consciousness came with the Black Power Movement. . . . That first . . . allegiance and alliance was because . . . the unit was our blackness. It was only over time you started appreciating some of the distinctions with what brothers thought and the women thought."⁶ When deconstructing ideas concerning women's choices about race over gender, it is important to understand many cultural-nationalist women grew into their gender consciousness over time and in the course of developing their Pan-African nationalist ideologies.

The majority of the women interviewed for this study initially chose to join the Black Freedom Struggle to combat racial oppression. In their motivations, they could be characterized as "race women," a term connoting a deep commitment to pride, uplift, and advancement vis-à-vis racial discrimination. Why would these women decide to enter masculinist organizations in the midst of the second-wave feminist movement? The literature and oral-history narratives reveal that rather than a rescue line bringing all women up from a degraded status to the safety of equal opportunity and access, women's rights organizing looked more like the web of a zigzag garden spider, its back and forth meanderings forming part of a cohesive yet complicated history of inclusion, exclusion, ambivalence, commitment, and rejection.

⁶ Mullings' statements supported Nantambu's ideas. Mullings wrote, "Race mediated every move for most of us growing up in the 1950s and 1960s; it was only in the company of other people of African descent that race could cease to exist." Mullings, *On Our Own Terms*, xi; Nantambu's narrative explained, once race ceased to be a constant focus, gender issues became apparent. Nana Anoa Nantambu, interview by author, New Orleans, LA, April 5, 2013. Nantambu must have been referring to such headlines as, "L.S.U. Tells Negroes They Are Unwanted," *The New York Times*, September 14, 1958, 51.

The key idea to remember, therefore, is that cultural-nationalist women were not anomalous in their choice to put “race first” and join masculinist groups committed to struggling for black freedom within the context of the Moynihan Report, the masculinist sixties, and a burgeoning second-wave feminist movement.⁷ They were following in the footsteps of previous generations of black activists. Moreover, the women of the Black Power Movement did so within a milieu of overarching patriarchal American culture, a feminist movement focused on white, middle class women’s struggles, and a growing, “muscular black nationalism” that equated black liberation to male dominance and female protection.⁸ Many activists of the Black Freedom Struggle who came before the cultural-nationalist women of the sixties consciously foregrounded race work. They sidestepped, lodged counterpoints to, or repudiated feminist perspectives even as they agitated for racial justice and equality.⁹ From Frederick Douglass and grassroots

⁷ Tony Martin has characterized “race first” as the central tenet of Marcus Garvey’s program, stating that “the black man was universally oppressed on racial grounds, and any program of emancipation would have to be built around the question of race first.” Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover, Massachusetts: Majority Press, 1976), 23. Martha Biondi’s work underscored the idea that “the ethos and political strategy of the Black Power era was indisputably race first.” Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 257. E.U. Essien-Udom emphasized that the ideology of race men was not primarily focused on racism but on identity consciousness, self-definition, group dignity, and community redemption. The inclusion of women in this definition was implied. E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 3.

⁸ For a discussion of how sixties masculinism reflected mainstream American patriarchal beliefs, see Brown, *Fighting for US*, 32-33; White, “Africa on My Mind,” 74; The term “muscular black nationalism” is from McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, 40. McDuffie cited Joseph, *Waiting ‘til the Midnight Hour*, 17-18 where Joseph described this type of nationalism through the lens of Nation of Islam ministers, who he stated ridiculed civil rights leaders as black men who had neglected to shield women and children from the ravages of white supremacists and bolstered promises of protection with declarations that females were the black nation’s most “valuable property.”; Also, the article “See Men Taking over Reigns of Negro Family,” *Muhammad Speaks*, January 7, 1966 provides confirmation of such views.

⁹ For example, in assessing the context of the years following the first-wave feminist movement, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn explained there had been a strong tradition of black women organizing for suffrage prior to the passage of the 19th Amendment, yet afterward, the majority of black feminists either joined white social feminists like Jane Addams and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom or, concerned with issues plaguing both men and women of their race, *bypassed the feminists altogether to deal with race within black organizations*. Olson, also came to similar conclusions in her study about women in the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement. It must be noted that women like the ones involved in this study did not have access to full-fledged historical treatments of black women’s histories and experiences within an institutionalized context at the time. An organic intellectual,

Garveyites like Queen Mother Audley Moore, to Fannie Lou Hamer, people in the Black Freedom Struggle grappled with the complexities of overlapping oppressions.¹⁰ As a result, some chose to make race the central thrust of their efforts. For certain activists, “race first” was a strategy used at specific times, for others it was a deeply-held belief. Many of the cultural-nationalist women, seeing figures like Douglass, Moore, and Hamer as role models, chose a similar tack.

Various women in the study named Queen Mother Audley Moore and Fannie Lou Hamer as models for their own activism. While Moore’s teachings are cited as having broad influence on the development of Black Power, she specifically proved to be a direct model for cultural-nationalist women, particularly those in CAP and The East organization.¹¹ At least for a while, some of the cultural-nationalist women were in ideological solidarity with Hamer in terms of thinking about feminism. Their race-first approach can be assessed with the following in mind. Like Moore, Hamer, and certain other members of the black community, the women knew the paradoxical reality that their white, middle-class feminist counterparts, while oppressed because

Moore stopped receiving formal education in the fourth grade and studied outside the academy for personal edification. She stated in 1973, “When the white woman got her vote, she didn’t see to it that black women got the vote.” Terborg-Penn reported the difficulty of having such historical realities entered into the canon. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, “Discontented Black Feminists: Prelude and Postscript to the Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment,” in *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women’s History* eds. Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed (New York: Carlson, 1995), 495; Olson, *Freedom’s Daughters*, 16-17; Queen Mother Moore, “The Black Scholar Interviews: Queen Mother Moore,” *The Black Scholar* 4, no. 6/7 (March-April 1973): 48.

¹⁰ The use of the term “Grassroots Garveyism” to describe Moore’s philosophy comes from Eric S. McDuffie and Komozi Woodard, “If You’re in a Country That’s Progressive, the Woman is Progressive: Black Women Radicals and the Making of the Politics and Legacy of Malcolm X,” *Biography* (Summer 2013) 36:3, 515. However, the term itself is from Rolinson’s book, *Grassroots Garveyism*. She used the term to highlight the appeal of Garveyism among African-American Southerners living outside the Northern, urban areas typically known as Garveyite strongholds. See Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹¹ McDuffie and Woodard cited Republic of New Africa leader Chokwe Lumumba’s assertion about Moore’s broad influence. The authors also listed the Congress of African People as one of the organizations Moore mentored. McDuffie and Woodard, “If You’re in a Country That’s Progressive, the Woman is Progressive,” 530-531.

of their gender, still benefited from race and sometimes class privilege. For example, Moore stated in a 1973 interview, “The black woman and the white woman live in two different worlds. But many of our misled bourgeois women may feel that their objectives are the same as the white woman. But they are sadly mistaken. My answer to that is definitely not, that the black woman does not belong in this white woman’s crusade against her man.”¹²

Moore and Hamer’s direct and indirect imprints on cultural-nationalist women were evident. Although Moore engaged in activities McDuffie would label as black Left feminist, he also explained she was devoted to Garveyism throughout the 1920s. The philosophy influenced her thinking about gender and sexuality as well as her identity as a black female.¹³ Moore directly passed some of her Garveyite beliefs to cultural-nationalist women in Kawaida-influenced groups such as The East. As Mtamanika Beatty, a member of the organization throughout most of the 1970s, recalled, Moore drew upon Garveyism when she taught there. Beatty stated:

Queen Mother Moore . . . was an important figure that stood strong and helped us understand how . . . it was important in that we needed to have a[n] impact on our communities and she would come to The East quite often, [she] and her sister . . . She was able to draw from [Garveyism] and, until I came to The East, I didn’t know who Marcus Garvey was, had no idea. I had no idea that there had been a movement . . . by a black man . . . that said, “up you mighty people,” . . . and could talk about going back to Africa and hold your head high and have parades and own a *steam liner*. How is that possible in that time? And he did that and that was just miraculous to me . . . not something that I could fathom had ever existed in this country. . . . She was very instrumental in encouraging the cultural consciousness of our people for us to be proud, for us to know that things are *not* as they seem.¹⁴

¹² Queen Mother Moore, “The Black Scholar Interviews,” 48.

¹³ McDuffie, *Sojourning*, 78.

¹⁴ Beatty interview; Former East members, Martha Bright, discussed Moore in her recollections. Martha Bright, interview, part 1 of 2; Tamisha Wendi Peterson also discussed Moore’s relationship with the East. Angela, Weusi, Aminisha Black, Abimbola Wali, Martha Bright, Tamisha Peterson, Akilah Mashariki, and Shukuru Copeland Sanders, “Memories of The East,” interview by Dwight Brewster, OJBK Radio, Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium, podcast audio, October 11, 2014, <http://www.centralbrooklynjazzconsortium.org/memoriesoftheeast.html>; Queen

In her narrative, Beatty recalled the lessons of self-sufficiency, race pride, and uplift Moore instilled.

While Moore directly mentored some of the 1960s and 1970s activist women, others remembered Fannie Lou Hamer as an indirect inspiration. For example, in recounting scholars and activists whose work influenced her own, Heru expressed that Hamer was her favorite role model.¹⁵ Other women, such as Vera Warren-Williams (Ahidiana) and Jaribu Hill (CFUN) also mentioned Hamer as an activist who stimulated their work.¹⁶

Like Hamer, many cultural-nationalist women saw themselves in what Bernice Reagon Johnson explained as “partnership[s] with black men in the interest of the family and the future of their people.”¹⁷ Often viewing feminism as a white woman’s issue that ultimately called upon black women to side against their fathers, brothers, male lovers, and sons, Pan-African cultural-nationalist women seemed to, at the very least, tacitly agree with Hamer’s statement, “I’m not hung up on this about liberating myself from the black man, I’m not going to try that thing. I got a black husband, six feet three, two hundred and forty pounds, with a 14 shoe, that I don’t want to be liberated from.” Hamer

Mother Moore’s sister, who Beatty mentioned, must have been Loretta Langley. Moore’s only other sister Eloise, also a community organizer and race woman, died in 1963. “Queen Mother Moore,” *Black Scholar* 1, no.8 (June 1970): 50.

¹⁵ Nzinga Heru, interview by author, Atlanta, Georgia, September 17, 2010.

¹⁶ Vera Warren-Williams, interview by author, May 27, 2013; Jaribu Hill, telephone interview by author, June 28, 2013.

¹⁷ Bernice Johnson Reagon, “Women as Culture Carriers: Fannie Lou Hamer,” in *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965*, eds. Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 213; Also according to Wini Breines, black feminisms competed with Black Power in terms of African-American women’s loyalty. Breines described Black Power as appealing in its ideas about racial unity and pride in opposition to feminism, which was seen as “divisive” and disloyal toward black men and communities. Wini Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 117.

went on to emphasize the need “to work together with the black man.” She asserted her belief in the importance of racial solidarity stating, “then we will have a better chance to just act as human beings, and to be treated as human beings in our sick society.”¹⁸

Like Hamer’s, Amina Baraka’s comments highlighted the idea that some black women of the era viewed feminism as white women’s ideology in the 1960s and 1970s. Baraka explained, “If you had called me a feminist in the seventies, I might have denied it. I didn’t want to be associated with it. Where does this come from? Back in the day . . . because feminism was always white.”¹⁹

Hamer made her statement in 1971 and Amina Baraka referred to her own sentiments within the climate of the seventies, yet the race-versus-sex conundrum facing the women in this study had existed a long time. The women who fell on the side of privileging race concerns over gender issues as they entered the Black Freedom Struggle in the late 1960s and the 1970s were not the first African Americans to do so. Although he was one of the most fervent advocates for female suffrage, in 1869 Frederick Douglass cited black male suffrage as more urgent than women’s voter rights at the time. “With us,” Douglass said, “the matter is a question of life or death.”²⁰ Working within a kind of “race-first paradigm,” at least temporarily, Douglass went on to detail the types of terror meted out on African Americans, opining that black women were victimized by the same types of violence, “but not because she is a woman, but because she is

¹⁸ Fannie Lou Hamer, “It’s in Your Hands,” (1971) in *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*, ed. Gerda Lerner (New York: Vintage, 1972), 612.

¹⁹ Baraka interview, July 12, 2012.

²⁰ Tracy A. Thomas, “Sex v. Race, Again,” *Washington University Law Review* 89, no. 6 (June 2008), accessed September 13, 2013, <http://lawreview.wustl.edu/commentaries/sex-v-race-again/>.

black.”²¹ According to this statement, race-based oppression was more severe and urgent an issue at the time and most of the women in this study held similar beliefs a century later.²²

The cultural-nationalist women of the 1960s and early 1970s Kawaida organizations faced the same difficult race/gender paradox as their predecessors, and they reasoned about the best methods for overcoming the multiple oppressions they faced within a given context. During various different periods over the course of history, discussions of race and gender have often been framed in a similar fashion as Douglass’ previously quoted statement. Race issues were sometimes understood and remembered as life or death. Gender issues were usually not discussed in the same way.

To be sure, Mtamanika Beatty expressed her beliefs about the dire consequences of racial discrimination. When questioned on the significance of race and gender activism, she stated, “I think that they’re both very, very important. The cultural part for me . . . I embraced that.” She further stressed a balanced outlook, “I think women’s rights are extremely important but I also know that working with race relationships and a racial consciousness is absolutely important.” Providing a contemporary example, Beatty said, “We look at the Trayvon Martin case and, my God, I just can’t figure out how that’s okay with so many people that this boy is not bothering anybody.” She reported, “It’s 7:30 in the evening with no weapon . . . with a hood on his head because it’s raining outside and he’s walking and he’s talking on the phone. It’s not like he’s

²¹ Thomas, “Sex v. Race, Again.”

²² Hamer, Douglass, and the cultural-nationalist women involved in my research were not alone. Tracy Thomas reported that the U.S. Supreme Court was necessarily involved in the race/sex debate. She wrote all the justices at the time of publication in 2008, except Ruth Bader Ginsberg, typically found gender “less problematic” than race. Thomas, “Sex v. Race, Again.” This fact also underlines the ways in which black nationalism often reflected mainstream-American, culturally conservative ideas. This theory was put forth by Jeffery O.G. Ogbar about the Nation of Islam and E. Frances White about black nationalism in general. Jeffery O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African America Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 194; E. Frances White, “Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse, and African-American Nationalism,” *Journal of Women’s History* 2 (Spring 1999): 73.

casing anybody and then he can wind up dead because somebody got out of their car and followed him.”²³ Beatty began her statement by declaring the importance of gender issues, but ended by implying the same idea Frederick Douglass stated outright. The perception that race work was the most urgent in the lives of African Americans was not new. Hence, it proved to be a motivating factor for black cultural-nationalist women who joined the struggle in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the race/gender conundrum, the two elements appear to be a dichotomy. Theorists have long claimed, however, that the question of struggle was not an either/or binary but multilayered, intersectional, and a reflection of the “multiple jeopardies” the women faced.²⁴ Hence, while race work was the imperative calling them to service, some black female participants in the Freedom Struggle nevertheless developed ideas about the importance of addressing gender inequity and women’s issues.²⁵ Sometimes their women’s rights philosophies developed from views about the shortcomings of male-dominated leadership constructs. For

²³ Beatty interview; Feminist theorist, Treva B. Lindsey, claims that, during what can be termed the post-Trayvon Martin era of racial terror against African Americans, antiblack violence has often been framed as an omnipresent offense, which black men and boys primarily experience. Treva B. Lindsey, “Post-Ferguson: A ‘Herstorical’ Approach to Black Viability,” *Feminist Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 233-234.

²⁴ McDuffie wrote black Left feminists first formulated the theory of triple oppression during the Old Left period. The concept highlighted the connections between race, class, and gender oppression and would influence the feminists of the 1970s in their formulation of intersectionality theories. McDuffie claimed the Combahee River Collective’s black socialist feminist manifesto of 1977 was the most clearly expressed version of the idea. McDuffie, *Sojourning*, 4. The expression “multiple jeopardies” later developed, indicating additional categories of oppression to include sexuality. Scholars understood it as an expression of the ways disadvantage was compounded and, thus, shaped experience. Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard Eibach, “Intersectional Invisibility: The Distinctive Advantages and Disadvantages of Multiple Subordinate Group Identities,” *Sex Roles* 59 (2008): 378.

²⁵ Olson also found this to be true in her research. She wrote about women in the Long Black Freedom Struggle, although she did not address women involved in the Black Power phase of the movement. Kristin Anderson-Bricker made a similar claim about black women in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in terms of emergent black feminisms of the 1960s and 1970s. My claim is that a treatment of female Pan-African cultural-nationalist activists of the same era revealed similar outcomes among certain groups and individuals. Olson, *Freedom’s Daughters*, 16-17; Kristin Anderson-Bricker, “‘Triple Jeopardy’: Black Women and the Growth of Feminist Consciousness in SNCC, 1964-1975,” in *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women’s Contemporary Activism*, ed. Kimberly Springer (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 49.

example, Fannie Lou Hamer's belief that "leadership came from actual work and commitment and was not preordained by sex," seemed to foreshadow Amina Baraka's statements that socialist-influenced theories related to activists' importance were determined according to one's work.²⁶

Although some of the women rejected feminism in the 1960s and early 1970s, they were nevertheless performing and theorizing aspects of feminism. Given the aforementioned beliefs, some of the women might specifically have defined themselves as what would be later outlined as Africana womanists. Africana womanism, specifically borne out of black cultural-nationalist considerations, can be read back onto some of the women's beliefs and praxis. In the early years of the movement, even in the midst of burgeoning second-wave feminism, some cultural-nationalist women chose a race-first approach and either avoided association with or outright rejected feminism. Many viewed the feminist movement as rife with exclusionary practices in terms of race and class. Some would eventually resist the chauvinism within cultural-nationalist groups and carve out spaces for themselves to renegotiate gender roles. Still others would continue to maintain that women's issues were important, but race was primary, a stance which was more in line with Africana womanism.

Within Kawaia-influenced organizations, a small number would come to openly embrace feminism over time. Some would classify their forebears and their own work specifically as feminism in hindsight. For example, Warren-Williams stated, "I think it was later on that the whole term feminist came about and it primarily grew out of what we understood as the white women's movement, but . . . we were always feminists."²⁷

²⁶ Johnson Reagon, "Women as Culture Carriers," 213. Baraka interview, July 17, 2012 (See page 7 of this chapter for Baraka's exact quote).

²⁷ Warren-Williams interview.

Women interpreted their struggles in various ways. While Warren-Williams saw herself and her activism as feminist, others viewed themselves and their movement work through the lenses of physical differences between women and men or through their roles as helpmates and mothers. Still other female cultural-nationalists during the Black Power era recalled that they had always labeled themselves within the same context as second-wave feminist organizers, some of whom developed distinct black feminist forms. Within the range of theories about women's rights and equality, some consciously summed up the situation and decided, as women's studies scholars Nikol Alexander-Floyd and Evelyn Simien expressed, "to emphasize the primacy of their racial identity."²⁸ Many of the women were quite Africana-womanist in worldview and their perceptions about the struggle were inextricably bound to their ideas about race and heteronormative family units.²⁹ For example former, Ahidiana member, Nilima Mwendo aligned herself with womanism, because it addressed black women's issues while emphasizing the importance of including males' perspectives.³⁰

This classification of some cultural-nationalist women as Africana womanist in sentiment is not meant to shift focus away from the fact that a number of the interviewed women came to the movement as feminists or found feminism and womanism via Black Power-era cultural-nationalist organizing. However, it highlights the reality that their remembrances reflect a range of responses. The existence of multiple beliefs further underscores the idea that African-American and women's freedom struggles were made of many movements and perspectives. Scholars emphasize there was never a Black Power or nationalist consensus; however, the fact

²⁸ Alexander-Floyd and Simien, "Revisiting 'What's in a Name?'" , 67.

²⁹ The term "heteronormative family units" refers to the idea that heterosexual parents are the standard, natural heads of households.

³⁰ Nilima Mwendo interview, New Orleans, LA, May 28, 2013.

that there was never a single agreed-upon method for engaging women's issues should also be highlighted.

2.2 *Vindicationists*

Nzinga Heru was a member of the Kawaïda Groundwork Committee in the late 1970s.³¹ Her narrative revealed an affinity for the race-vindicationist tradition as yet another motivation for enlisting in the Black Power-era cultural-nationalist struggle via Kawaïda-influenced organizations. According to historian Wilson Jeremiah Moses the “vindicationist” tradition describes “the project of defending black people from the charge that they have made little or no contribution to the history of human progress.” Many Black Power-era cultural nationalists, as Moses pointed out about Afrocentrists of the subsequent era, believed racial vindication was necessary because people of African descent have been socialized to “doubt the capacity of black people for ‘civilization,’ meaning self-government, mechanical invention, economic independence, and abstract reasoning.”³² Moses explained that many scholars from W.E.B. Du Bois to Malcolm X forwarded the theory that black people suffered from self-hatred or self-doubt in specific ways.³³ Working from this perspective, vindicationists undertook the project of

³¹ Heru interview, September 17, 2010. Both Nzinga Ratibisha and Subira Kifano were named as “founders of the Kawaïda Groundwork Committee (Us).” Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1993), xvii; Kawaïda Groundwork Committee was based in Inglewood, California, a city located in the southwest region of the greater Los Angeles area. Subira Kifano, interview with author, December 30, 2010.

³² Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21.

³³ Moses, *Afrotopia*, 21-23.

using the histories of African civilizations to correct the record, prove black people have made contributions to human progress, and help erode black self-hatred and marginalization.³⁴

Heru mentioned vindicationist historian Drusilla Dunjee Houston (1876-1941) as one of many inspirational role models. Heru stated that, as a cultural nationalist, she was performing work similar to that of notable historians and teachers by “trying to get people to understand the contributions that Africans had made to the world, that the world owe[s] us, should be thanking us.” Heru went further, pointing out historical figures’ deep commitment to the struggle for black progress. “They weren’t for thanks . . . self-gratification, none of that,” she said. “They were doing it for the upliftment of the race, Septima Clark, Drusilla Houston.”³⁵ Given these statements, Heru must have felt a sense of connection with her predecessors in the grassroots scholar/activist tradition.

The race-vindicationist nature of Heru’s work of supporting research, organizing events, and teaching about the ancient history of African peoples in certain ways mirrored Drusilla Dunjee Houston’s.³⁶ A self-educated historian, teacher, and journalist, Houston believed Europeans systematically plotted to conceal black people’s great deeds. She self-published

³⁴ Here, I am referring to the conventional geographical framing of Africa, which includes all of the northern and eastern parts of the continent. Geographer Martin W. Lewis and historian Kären E. Wigen put forward the critique that vindicationists and Afrocentrists have used the conventional framing in constructing an essentialized view of “African culture” that shapes their paradigms for analyzing black history. Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 116.

³⁵ Heru interview, September 17, 2010.

³⁶ Heru’s work did not only mirror Dunjee Houston’s, but both women’s work was also like Margaret Murray Washington’s in certain ways. Jacqueline Rouse wrote about Murray Washington’s passion for fostering black self-determination, preserving African-American history, and working for its inclusion in public affairs and educational curricula. Rouse asserted that Murray Washington’s efforts as Tuskegee University’s lady principal, women’s club leader, and wife of Booker T. Washington was race-vindicationist in nature and supported black economic and cultural nationalism in many ways. Jacqueline Anne Rouse, “Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee: Margaret Murray Washington, Social Activism, and Race Vindication,” *The Journal of Negro History* 18, no. 1/4 (Winter-Autumn 1996): 38-39.

Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire in 1926 as a part of her larger effort to use education and culture for molding African-American identity.³⁷ Houston's use of culture in this way sheds light on reasons why her work would appeal to cultural nationalists. As historian Pero Dagbovie explained, Houston joined several other nadir-era "historians without portfolio" in the vindicationist school of thought to oppose white-supremacist historical constructs. Through teaching, activism, research, and related activities, the group of lay historians Houston belonged to distributed their research to the black community, particularly the youth, as a means of empowerment.

These informally-trained vindicationists believed "denial or falsification of African and African American history bolstered the oppression of African peoples throughout the diaspora."³⁸ The conception that omitting or distorting non-European people's histories formed part of the foundation of white-supremacy echoed in other Black Power-era cultural-nationalist women's narratives. For instance, former East member Mtamanika Beatty pointed out, "We might not have done very much here [in the United States] at this time, but our legacy prior to that was great and even looking closer and examining what our history has been in this country, we've done a lot more than we're led to believe."³⁹ Tamisha Wendie Peterson was an educator who also wrote curricula and course materials for The East's independent school, *Uhuru Sasa*. Reasoning about the results of racially-exclusive history and teaching methods, she said historians, administrators, and educators "give you tons of European history and little

³⁷ Laurie F. Maffley-Kipp and Kathryn Lofton, eds., *Women's Work: An Anthology of African-American Women's Historical Writings from Antebellum America to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 203-204, accessed November 15, 2013, EBSCOhost eBook Collection.

³⁸ Pero Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 251; Tamisha Wendie Peterson, interview by author, January, 25, 2013, Atlanta, GA.

³⁹ Beatty interview.

[smatterings] of different cultures.” She went on to declare, “That’s not inclusive . . . the European child is going to come out thinking, well, I’m the ‘it’ and the others are going to come out thinking, well, we have to be like them because we didn’t do too much of anything.”⁴⁰

The ideas in Beatty’s and Peterson’s narratives meshed with the broader belief that consciously using an African-centered yet culturally-diverse educational curriculum as a nation-building tool would vindicate and uplift the race. These East members’ recollections in some ways mirrored the declarations of the CFUN *Mumininas* who outlined the roles of nationalist women in 1971. In more gendered statements than the recent self-narratives, the CFUN women’s group stressed females’ special roles as educators in the following statements. “In the education of our children, it is important to instill pride without teaching racism.” Framing the nation-building project of community development within the vindicationist paradigm of reestablishing a faltering people’s prosperity, the women continued, “Our children must develop an attitude of learning and working together for Nation Time. The building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.”⁴¹

Neither Heru, Beatty, nor Peterson held a history degree or was formally trained in the field; therefore, their narratives reflected the fact that, like Houston, their education in history and vindicationist sentiments were generally nurtured outside the ivory tower. In particular, Heru’s path, at least momentarily, wound through Kawaida Groundwork Committee’s cultural-

⁴⁰ Peterson interview.

⁴¹ Mumininas of Committee for Unified Newark, *Mwanamke Mwananchi (The Nationalist Woman)*, pamphlet, 1971, 10, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library Archives Division, Atlanta, GA.

nationalist literacy and education practices to the presidency of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC).⁴²

ASCAC's mission was Afrocentric. Its goal was to provide "a body of knowledge that continuously contributes to the rescue, reconstruction and restoration of African history and culture."⁴³ As Dagbovie pointed out, Drusilla Dunjee Houston's studies were precursory to the Afrocentric traditions developing in the period following the Black Power movement. Heru's explanations of the influences stimulating her Pan-African cultural-nationalism and her subsequent work with the formation of ASCAC via Black Power-era activism and connections support Dagbovie's claim that nadir-era vindicationism influenced post-Black Power Afrocentrism. Additionally, Heru's narrative confirmed the idea that some of the women joining Black Power cultural-nationalist groups, such as Beatty and Peterson, directly and indirectly viewed themselves within the older race-vindicationist ideological framework. The women's stories also illuminate the influence of females, from intellectuals to community-based activists, on Carter G. Woodson's movement to develop, disseminate, and celebrate black history.⁴⁴

⁴² The Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations is an organization dedicated to producing, studying, and disseminating teaching African and African-diaspora histories from a vindicationist or contributionist paradigm. It was found at Los Angeles Southwest College in 1984. Nzinga Ratibisha Heru, *Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations Study Guide: "Building for Eternity,"* Book 1, 2010 (in the author's possession), 8. Heru is mentioned as ASCAC president in, "A New Legacy," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 4, 1996, A1; "Kwanzaa Family Walk to Be Held Oct. 25 in Leimert Park," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 16, 1997, A3

⁴³ Heru, *Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations Study Guide*, 9.

⁴⁴ In her narrative, Heru spelled out the idea that her work with ASCAC was modeled on that of Carter G. Woodson in addition to Houston's. Wanting to bring more focus to what she viewed as the centrality of Nile Valley Civilizations to the construction and commemoration of black history than Woodson's ASALH offered, she convened and served on the executive committee for such ASCAC endeavors as the *African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge*. *The Preliminary Challenge* was a book project designed for stimulating scholars to rethink world history from an Afrocentric paradigm. Heru interview, November 29, 2010; Conrad Worrill, "African-Centered Conference to Define Unity, Self-Worth," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 26, 1999, 7A; Jacob H. Carruthers and Leon C. Harris, eds, *African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge* (Los Angeles: Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, 1997).

2.3 *From the Great Migration to Civil Rights Movement Sentiment*

Many of the Black Power-era cultural-nationalist women in this study expressed motivation to join, or had been part of, the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. This section of the chapter explores some of the impulses appearing in earlier twentieth-century movements among women who would come to embrace Black Power cultural nationalism. The guiding premise—“movement”—emanates from themes in the oral histories conducted for this study. The term “movement” is used as a unifying topic to explore varied influences, from migration to social upheaval, which catalyzed and contoured cultural-nationalist women’s activism.

The narratives of female cultural nationalists who joined the Black Power Movement revealed that many held affinities for the activists and aims of the Civil Rights Movement, whether the women came of age in the South or the North. Many of the self-narratives suggested the powerful influence of the Great Migration, a mass movement of six million African-American Southerners throughout the country over six decades. It located the women in western and northern urban areas from Los Angeles to New York City, yet fostered attachments to the land and the people of the South as well as to Civil Rights Movement activism.⁴⁵ Through familial and cultural ties, many of those reared outside the South developed feelings of solidarity with people who were struggling against de jure Jim Crow in the land of their forebears. Moreover, the migration relocated African Americans in various parts of the country where they still experienced de facto forms of segregation, which stimulated them to join the Black Freedom Struggle.

Nzinga Heru, born Clydean Parker, belonged to a family that migrated North and later West from Clarksdale in Coahoma County, a part of Mississippi’s Delta region. The Delta was a

⁴⁵ Wilkerson, 9.

notorious hub of the abusive sharecropping system that replaced chattel slavery. Sharecropping mired poor farmers, who were disproportionately African American, in a cycle of debt and kept them in a state of peonage. The farmers were tied to landowners who exacted payment in the forms of crops and labor. Racial segregation was a related political structure designed to enforce social inequality and deny African Americans' basic civil rights.⁴⁶ Though Heru's family left these circumstances, she knew the degradation and poverty they escaped. She remembered that, just after World War I, her parents left Mississippi seeking a better life for their children. Recalling landowners' use of intimidation and force to restrict the movement of black workers, who the planters often viewed as mere commodities, Heru said her family "had to sneak out of Mississippi." She continued, "You couldn't just get up and walk out of Mississippi. So they had to leave in the middle of the night [and] get on the train."⁴⁷

Heru went on to provide more details of her family's history, illustrating factors that both pushed and pulled African Americans to migrate. Providing a vivid example of the push white supremacists' actions provided, she recalled the anger and violence routinely aimed at returning black soldiers. These actions reinforced racial hierarchy. Heru said her family "moved to St. Paul, Minnesota because my mother's oldest sister and husband had moved there right after World War I because when he was walking down the streets of Mississippi, they wanted the soldiers to take their uniforms off and he wasn't going for that." She also recounted an example of the lure of greater opportunity. Her uncle was able to find employment working on the

⁴⁶ Lemann, Nicholas, *The Promised Land: The Great Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 6. Lemann's book began and ended with assessments of life in Clarksdale, Mississippi. The author framed the town as a symbol of African Americans' oppression within the following interrelated systems: debt peonage on cotton farms and plantations rooted in the area's alluvial soil; massive disfranchisement as a tool of enforced social and political degradation; and the fundamental changes occurring when the first mechanical cotton picker was introduced there. The resulting joblessness was an element that sparked massive migration.

⁴⁷ Nzinga Heru interview by author, Atlanta, Georgia, November 29, 2010.

railroad. She went on to say he “went back and got my mother’s oldest sister and that’s how they got to St. Paul, Minnesota, so they were there since 1921. . . . My mother and father moved up . . . before World War II, so they didn’t go up right away. They went up later, but . . . the last five of us were born up in St. Paul.”⁴⁸

Heru conveyed a sense of understanding about the ramifications of her relatives’ desire to escape the specter of Mississippi Jim Crow and their determination to uplift themselves and their race. Those elements drove her own sense of connection to the Black Freedom Struggle. Heru stated, “I find myself always committed to the black thing.”⁴⁹ She described how she was given a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) membership at a young age, having grown up in a family which privileged political engagement. According to family lore, she became a member as an infant. Her family paid the membership fee during a drive at Minnesota’s oldest black church, Pilgrim Baptist.⁵⁰

Heru explained her family’s background, stating her uncle and aunt “were at the big Baptist church and they were progressive people and a young couple. Just very, very upward aspiring.” Expounding on her family’s interest in the Civil Rights Movement, Heru stated, “They taught us a lot about the movement because [my uncle] was very active in the NAACP in his older years. So, I was a member of the NAACP at six months old. Because they bought memberships then, it was only fifty cents the way they tell it.” Heru discussed her earliest activist experiences, saying, “When I was real young, we picketed Woolworth’s and Grant’s [in St. Paul,

⁴⁸ Heru interview, November 29, 2010.

⁴⁹ Heru interview, November 29, 2010.

⁵⁰ For information on Pilgrim Baptist Church see Rose French, “Minnesota’s Oldest Black Church, Pilgrim Baptist, Marks 150 Years of Praise,” *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*, June 16, 2013, accessed November 21, 2013, <http://ezproxy.gsu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1367740914?accountid=11226>.

Minnesota circa 1960]. I was a young girl. Because they would picket them in the South.” She then revealed vivid memories of being a youngster involved in weekly protests, “The reason I remember is because I had this navy blue skirt on, that the wind kept blowing it up, and I had to hold it down . . . and I had a red and white polka dot blouse I wore for this picketing. Every Saturday morning we’d go down there and picket them.”⁵¹

Heru’s NAACP affiliation lasted through the 1960s. Her narrative reflected the idea that her tenure with the association provided a strong activist impulse. Having served as vice president of the local youth council, she must have gained valuable organizing skills as well. Thomas Bynum and others have documented that NAACP youth appropriated more strident tactics to accomplish their aims than did older members.⁵² They were more likely to employ nonviolent direct action (like picketing) to reach their goals than to solely focus on legal strategies. This chapter stresses elements cultural-nationalist women shared with and inherited from their predecessors. However, it is possible that Heru’s experiences as a young person participating in nonviolent direct action at such a critical turning-point as the turbulent sixties sparked a penchant for approaching activism in less conventional ways than the preceding generations, as Bynum pointed out about NAACP youth. Although the activist seed had been sewn by previous generations, it continued to grow throughout the 1970s. Its fruits looked less orthodox as the Civil Rights Movement gave way to the Black Power era.

⁵¹ Heru interview, November 29, 2010. For a glimpse of the NAACP’s picketing of Woolworth’s and Grant’s in St. Paul, see “NAACP Members Picketing Woolworth’s for Integrated Lunch Counters, St. Paul,” *St. Louis Dispatch and Pioneer Press*, April 2, 1960, accessed October 18, 2013, Civil Rights Digital Library, <http://collections.mnhs.org/VisualResources/details.cfm?imageid=115592&ImageNum=8&Page=1&Keywords=Civil%20rights>.

⁵² Thomas L. Bynum, *NAACP Youth and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1936-1965* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press: 2013), xiii.

Subira Kifano was Heru's biological sister. Like Heru, Kifano's activist impulse was cultivated in the NAACP St. Paul branch and came to fruition in the Kawaida Groundwork Committee during the late 1970s. Unlike Heru, whose membership was short-lived, Kifano stayed after the group was reconstituted as the Organization Us and remained for twenty years.⁵³ Born Aleathia Parker in 1950, Kifano confirmed the germ of her sister's and her activism came from their early orientation to the Freedom Struggle through the NAACP. She recalled, "It was there that the activism really started . . . in terms of [my] childhood, in terms of my aunt and my uncle being involved in the NAACP. In the '50s, my aunt took us, Nzinga, [me], and I think [our brother] Buddy too."

Kifano added more details about the origins of the family's penchant for activism. She remembered participating in a boycott of Woolworth and Grant's department stores because African Americans could not eat in the restaurant despite the fact that they had purchased food there. "We'd have to order this food on the side or just not go. So, I remember boycotting at maybe seven, eight, or nine. I can't remember exactly what age. I think that was like really . . . the seed in terms of outward activism."

Kifano believed her aunt shaped family traditions of active protest against injustice, but the Parker parents also imparted a deep sense of self-advocacy and race pride in their children. Memories of life in the Mississippi Delta framed the Parkers' beliefs about race and social justice and molded their "philosophy or . . . perspective in terms of recognizing that African-American people *have* a struggle against and resistance

⁵³ "Us Celebrates 31st Anniversary: Us, A History of Service, Struggle, and Institution Building," *Harambee Notes* 2.8-2.9 (August-September 1996), 1; Subira Kifano, interview with author, December 30, 2010.

to oppression and the imposition by the dominant people in power, white people,” Kifano explained. “I think . . . the black consciousness . . . came from my parents,” she concluded.⁵⁴

The narrative of early Us Organization member Imani Omotayo (pseud.) also reflected sentiments shaped by her location in the West, issues with de facto racial discrimination, and affinities for Southerners embroiled in the struggle for freedom. Ifetayo was a college student in the mid-1960s. She shared the following story about how she became involved in the movement. “What interested me,” she said, “was the Black Power Movement’s mantra . . . ‘I’m black [and] I’m proud.’” She discussed how her initial interest grew into participation in Us Organization activities, “I started going to Soul Sessions because I liked the way Dr. Karenga spoke, and his representatives, and the time was ripe for that because black people . . . I guess, were continuing to be oppressed.” Ifetayo recounted problems she and her classmates had at the college they attended in terms of accessing courses on African-American life and history. She also explained that civil-rights activism had piqued her awareness of such issues. “I was already very conscious of the equalities and unfairness in the world I lived in because I was at the end of the Civil Rights Movement,” she stated. “I was like twelve or thirteen when the Civil Rights Movement was going on. I wanted to be involved, but of course, my parents lived in California and you couldn’t really go to the South but I always told my mother I’d like to go march with the people,” she said, explaining her desire to participate in the struggle for black freedom and equality in some way.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Subira Kifano, interview by author, Atlanta, GA, December 30, 2010.

⁵⁵ Imani Ifetayo (pseud.), interview by author, February 11, 2013; Soul Sessions took the form of Sunday afternoon assemblies during which members of Us or CAP affiliates would gather at their respective organizations’ headquarters to fellowship and hear weekly messages from key figures such as Maulana Karenga, Amiri Baraka, or Haki Madhubuti. Kifano interview, December 30, 2010; Amina Thomas, interview by author, Atlanta, GA, July 31,

While Heru and Kifano were actually affiliated with Civil Rights Movement organizations and with nonviolent direct-action protest, Ifetayo dreamed about such involvement. Ifetayo described how she liked to listen to civil rights speakers. “I did go see Dr. King at churches,” she said. “When he came to California, twice I had my mother . . . take me to a church to hear him speak and so I really would’ve been a civil rights worker had I been older.” Ifetayo explained that black nationalism gained popularity during her teen years. “By the time I became eighteen, then of course Kwaiaida, the cultural movement, came along . . . It appealed to me, the cultural aspect.” she said. Uplifted by the changing times and a sense of conviviality, she recounted how she changed her habits of grooming and personal style. She remarked, “I don’t have to press my hair anymore. [I] liked . . . the African dress. So, I think it was all about culture and there was a dance troupe, and we could model and we sewed. So, I think it was just the comraderie I felt being a part of the black movement. That’s what attracted me, was the cultural aspect.”⁵⁶

The women’s statements indirectly support the idea that Black Power-era Pan-African cultural-nationalist women must actually be understood within the context of a Long Black Freedom Struggle phase during which activists groped for solutions to the intractable aspects of inequality in the United States. The Civil Rights Movement had not effectively addressed certain issues, particularly those related to cultural hegemony. The Civil Rights Movement, for instance, addressed issues such as integration of mainstream spaces, but did not challenge the problematic nature of white normalcy within those spaces. In their efforts to enter the movement by way of

2013; Jamala Rogers, interview by author, Atlanta, Georgia, October 5, 2012; Brown, *Fighting for US*, 35-36; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 132.

⁵⁶ Imani Ifetayo (pseud.), interview.

organizations seeking to tackle such problems, Black Power-era cultural nationalists should not be viewed solely as fringe elements in a movement that “seemed to come out of nowhere.”⁵⁷ However, they can be understood as activists who were influenced by multiple antecedents and who, at a distinct moment in history, responded to a complex situation in unique and diverse ways.

2.4 Labor-Movement Men and Women: A Call to Action

Migration situated African Americans within the urban industrial workforce where they became an important part of the country’s labor resources. Large numbers of African Americans flowed from rural to urban areas and from the South to the Northeast, Midwest, and West to fill wartime labor demands. Many toiled in unskilled jobs. A number of them were also unionized. According to historians Horace Huntley and David Montgomery, black workers developed informal networks, caucuses, and study groups within unions linking them to civil rights organizations based in churches and community collectives.⁵⁸ Thus, the Great Migration influenced black workers’ politics. According to cultural-nationalist women’s narratives, their parents’ labor struggles, both outside and inside unions, partially influenced their own sense of activism.

Jamala Rogers’ (formerly Terry Massey) sense of activism was shaped by her father’s struggle to gain union access as an African-American laborer in the Midwest. Rogers was a

⁵⁷ See Sean Posey, “Will Black Nationalism Reemerge?” *Truthout*, accessed September 22, 2013, <http://www.truthout.org/news/item/18974-will-black-nationalism-reemerge> for an example of such popularly-held ideas, which cast Black Power as a movement without provenance.

⁵⁸ Horace Huntley and David Montgomery, *Black Workers’ Struggle for Equality in Birmingham* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 22.

member of CAP's St. Louis affiliate, Working Always Through Unity (WATU).⁵⁹ Her mother, Lollie, and her biological father, Bennett Massey, migrated from Georgia in the early 1950s. Massey moved to Missouri to attend school and enter the plumbing trade. Recounting a life story inflected with class consciousness, Rogers stated her father, "never was able to join the union until probably *really* late. I mean, he was damn near retiring then, so he never really made the level of moneys a real plumber would have made even today."⁶⁰ Her father's exclusion from unions seemed to color her sense of the inequality barring African Americans from full citizenship in the U.S. and contributed to her desire to struggle for change.

Like Rogers, both Ahidiana member Vera Warren-Williams and East member Mtamanika Beatty revealed deep identification with their parents as laborers. Williams stated her father, Edward Warren, worked on the railroad in New Orleans. Beatty recalled her father, Charles, was a New York building-trades professional working in various challenging positions, which she believed contributed to his alcoholism. "My father, who was a heavy drinker . . . was a construction worker and he did different phases of that, bricklaying [and] driving the buggy when they were building the buildings. He actually worked on the building of Rockefeller Center," she commented. Elaborating on the toll such work exacted, she noted, "It was a very stressful job that I didn't understand as a child and as I got older, I understood that."⁶¹ Like Beatty, other women reflected in their narratives the idea that witnessing their fathers' struggles

⁵⁹ Rogers interview. The Kiswahili word *watu* meant "people." Aponte Mfariji, "Kiswahili," *Black News* 2, no 4. (June 2, 1973), 17 and M. Jalia, "Monthly Kiswahili Lesson," *Black New Ark*, March 1973, 4; The written acronym and location appeared in Jitu Weusi, "New Short Shots," *Black News* 2, no 4. (June 2, 1973), 16. *Watu* meant "people" in Kiswahili.

⁶⁰ Rogers interview. For more information and a bibliography on discriminatory unionizing practices see Dana Crum, "Hard Labor: Scholars Chronicle the Relationship of African Americans to Unions and the Industrialization of America," *Black Issues Book Review* (September/October 2006): 38-39.

⁶¹ Beatty interview.

as black laborers was crucial to awakening their sense of social and economic inequality, particularly at a time in U.S. history when African Americans were educationally and professionally limited.

The labor organizing activities of the women's unionized parents also provided activist impetus. Vera Warren-Williams recalled her father was a union member and her mother, George Ethel Warren, organized domestic workers for fair treatment and pay. Williams discussed their influence on her organizing: "Basically the combination of the two of them, my father working with the union and mother's activism brought me to where I was [as an activist later in life]." She explained, "I would always go to union meetings. . . . I would see my father in roles of leadership in the union and at church, primarily dealing with money and finance. He was the treasurer, so going to the bank, going to the supermarket, learning how to budget and sacrifice and save and all of that."⁶² Interestingly, Williams' statements also reflected the previously-mentioned connections linking unions to other areas of organizing such as churches, community groups, family organizing, and leadership.

While considering the purpose of her father's labor advocacy during the 1960s, Mtamanika Beatty similarly recalled sitting in meetings and witnessing organizers as a youth. At the time, her father had joined a local organization called Harlem Fight Back, which was founded after passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The organization was aimed at harnessing the energy of the Civil Rights Movement for integrating all-white construction unions.⁶³

⁶² Warren-Williams interview.

⁶³ Johnny Dwyer, "This Hammer for Hire," *The New York Times*, February 4, 2007, accessed September 4, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/04/nyregion/thecity/04coal.html?pagewanted=all>; Harlem Fight Back used direct action, and occasionally employed guerilla tactics, to halt large, all-white, government-funded construction jobs and assert their right to work on such projects. Komozi Woodard, "Imamu Baraka, the Newark Congress of African People, and Black Power Politics," in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 55.

Mtamanika Beatty (then Charlene) was at the Fight Back gatherings because they were of such importance to her family that both parents attended and brought along the children. Such experiences were influential in developing her desire to join the Black Freedom Struggle.

Mtamanika also remembered watching Charles Beatty donate his time and the family's resources to the movement by assisting the leader of Fight Back, James Haughton. She said, "We had come from southern New Jersey into Brooklyn and a lot of times my father would keep a car." She further explained that her father assisted Haughton with traveling to different locations and "advocating on behalf of black people working on construction sites and boycotting those construction sites 'til they took on some black people to work in there because generally they would try to have those sites to be union sites and they wouldn't let the black people into the union." Mtamanika recollected that the Beatty family contributed time and resources to Fight Back for several years. As a result, she believed "the bug of activism" bit her.⁶⁴

It is notable that Haughton factored heavily in Beatty's memories about her budding activism. Though the Black Freedom Struggle was composed of several distinct phases and movements, his presence in her story highlighted an underlying continuity between the different movements within the struggle. Most interesting was the fact that Haughton combined his Fight Back labor organizing and his civil rights activism through such groups as the NAACP with work in a Black Power coalition united for the purpose of forming a third political party. The coalition included the Kawaiida-influenced Congress of African People, of which Mtamanika Beatty's East organization was a part.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Mtamanika (Charlene) Beatty, interview by author, Atlanta, GA, July 23, 2013.

⁶⁵ "James Haughton Papers, 1929-1984," Collection Overview, New York Public Library, accessed September 4, 2013, <http://www.nypl.org/ead/3700#idp312464>.

The pattern of Haughton's activism underscored what the women's narratives also revealed, that Kawaia-influenced Black Power organizations existed on a continuum in the Black Freedom Struggle. Within the context of the Black Power era, such Pan-African cultural-nationalist groups were not completely alien. At the time, they seemed to be viewed as choices among several organizations taking various approaches to confront the complex forms of oppression African-descended people faced. Thus, the women's choices to join the struggle as they did reveal how much they were like the activists who preceded them. They selected the arenas to play out their desires for effecting change in the unique context of the mid-1960s, an idea which will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.5 *Local and International Movements: Catalysts for Activism*

Like their foremothers, Pan-African cultural-nationalist women joined the struggle because they were motivated to change their communities and the world. Communities could be comprised of people living in a specific area, but for cultural-nationalist women and their forebears, communities were also "imagined" groups bound by race as well as members' shared histories, interests, goals, and belief in a common destiny.⁶⁶ Thus, cultural-nationalist women often framed the desire to ameliorate oppressive conditions within their communities in terms superseding national boundaries. Moreover, they chose to struggle based on local issues as well as global concerns with people who were considered to be outside of their immediate communities but who shared common struggles, for example against imperialism.

⁶⁶ Benedict Anderson used the term "imagined" to mean "invented" and "created" rather than "false." Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983: repr., London: Verso, 1996), 6-7.

Inspired to struggle in a similar vein as their community-organizer foremothers, many Black Power era Pan-African cultural nationalists were like the women of McDuffie's study. As McDuffie claimed about black female Communists of the old Left, women "possessed organic connections to the neighborhood" because "they had lived there for years, and they were intimately familiar with the community's concerns."⁶⁷ McDuffie went further to assert that black community mores as well as overarching American patriarchal values often framed grass-roots leadership as women's domain. This belief, he asserted, better positioned women as community leaders. In many ways, this concept meshed with ideals about the women's so-called "proper places," which extended to include aspects of the neighborhoods, schools, and religious institutions or people with common goals and interests in general, as long as their work advocated for prosperity of family, home, and community. As such, activists of the 1960s and 70s directly and indirectly modeled older nationalists such as Queen Mother Moore and Amy Jacques Garvey. Such women joined the movement and functioned as community organizers in roles deemed acceptable as part of both the internal cultures of black communities and the external values of middle America.

As scholars Ula Taylor, Keisha Blain, and Natanya Duncan asserted about Garveyites during the first half of the twentieth century, black-nationalist female role models from earlier generations performed a kind of "community feminism" or "efficient womanhood," cultivating their own leadership activities while also remaining steadfast in their roles as wives and mothers. They pursued personal development and interests, never fully accepting or rejecting circumscribed domestic roles outright.⁶⁸ As community leaders, the women led rent strikes and

⁶⁷ McDuffie, *Sojourning*, 88.

⁶⁸ Duncan derived the phrase "efficient womanhood" from a W.E.B. Du Bois essay in which he claimed certain protections and strictures for white "ladies" were not afforded and applied to African-American "women." He

organized tenants' leagues, domestic workers, and unions. Others managed health and childcare services, edited literature for publication, met with public officials, and mobilized voters.⁶⁹

More specifically, women like Vera Warren-Williams' mother George Ethel also found it acceptable to work publicly in the community for the good of the race. They organized in their neighborhoods around issues ranging from domestic abuse to adult education. George Ethel specifically focused on the Ninth Ward area of New Orleans where she lived, serving as president of the Citizens' Voter Education Association, joining the local NAACP, and working with the Urban League.⁷⁰ According to Warren-Williams, her mother was a model for activism. Remembering her mother, Warren-Williams said, "Whatever was wrong, she stood on the side of making it right." Yet, Warren-Williams also noted her mother was "considered a homemaker."⁷¹ Pan-African cultural-nationalist women's narratives reflected a theme of holding community leadership in high regard, particularly as an impetus for their own activism. Yet, they also

postulated that this reality had both complicated consequences. One outcome, wrote Du Bois, was that Black women gained more "strength" through adversity and the ability to flout certain gender norms. Through necessity and experience, Du Bois asserted black women became productive community members whose public work was essential for the "freedom and uplift" of the race. Asserting Taylor's term "feminist" was a misnomer for Garveyite women, Duncan defined "efficient womanhood" as staunch support of race work, defiance of prevalent ideas consigning women to domestic duty, and the belief that work in the public domain was respectable as long as it supported the nationalist cause. In assessing Amy Jacques Garvey's work, Taylor coined the term "community feminist." She described the phrase as a conjoined feminism and nationalism that contained a critique of chauvinistic ideas deeming women as intellectually inferior to men. Both definitions work in the context of Black Power-era cultural-nationalism, as the women defined activism using a range of terms. Some, such as Amina Baraka, Jamala Rogers, Jaribu Hill, Vera Warren-Williams, and Safiya Bandele found the term "feminist" acceptable while others such as Heru rejected any association with feminism. Natanya Duncan, "The Efficient Womanhood of the Universal Negro Improvement Association: 1919-1930," (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2009), 7; Ula Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 235-237; Keisha N. Blain, "We Want to Set the World on Fire": Black Nationalist Women and Diasporic Politics in the *New Negro World*, 1940-1944," *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 1 (2015): 199; W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Damnation of Woman" in *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1920), Project Gutenberg e-book; Rogers interview; Hill interview; Warren-Williams interview; Safiya Bandele, interview by author, telephone interview, August 22, 2013.

⁶⁹ McDuffie, *Sojourning*, 85; Duncan, "Efficient Womanhood," 7; Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*, 235-237.

⁷⁰ Neighborhood Activist of Lower 9th Ward Dies, *Times Picayune*, December 28, 1996, accessed October 22, 2013, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/orleans/newspapers/00000161.txt>.

⁷¹ Warren-Williams interview.

expressed an understanding of how the women's public work of community organizing was acceptable and important, as it meshed with their essential domestic roles as helpmates and mothers. In this sense, Pan-African cultural-nationalist women were not anomalous in their origins, but they reflected the imprint of their forebears' mores and norms as "efficient women" or "community feminists."

Beyond being stimulated to make their homes and local communities better places, Pan-African cultural-nationalist women during the Black Power era were also motivated to struggle in ways that ideologically situated them within the framework of black internationalism, particularly in their transnational conceptions of community. According to Michael O. West and William G. Martin, struggle was the main thread binding black internationalism. The authors defined internationalism as "conscious interconnection and interlocution of black struggles across man-made and natural boundaries—including the boundaries of nations, empires, continents, oceans, and seas."⁷² Black-Power internationalism has taken the form of global anti-imperialist sentiment and activities and has been third-world oriented to include both blacks and nonblacks.⁷³ Ahidiana members provided an example of the imperative for internationalist engagement in the statement, "We learned from Malcolm X that African-American people must struggle on the world stage; not merely around our local interests." This declaration was followed with references to the eclectic mix of intellectuals undergirding the group's

⁷² Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkin, eds., *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

⁷³ Fanon Che Wilkins, "'In the Belly of the Beast': Black Power, Anti-imperialism, and the African Liberation Solidarity Movement 1968-1975." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2001, xv.

philosophies, including Mary McLeod Bethune, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and Mao Zedong.⁷⁴

As the designation Pan-Africanist suggests, others were influenced by such factors as exposure to Garveyism and ideas about African independence movements.⁷⁵ Once involved, Pan-African cultural-nationalist women organized and participated in such activities as antiapartheid protests. They were also conference delegates and members of work and study groups traveling to such countries as China, Guyana, and Tanzania.⁷⁶ Additionally, the women helped organize and participated in the Brooklyn-based African Street Carnival (later African Street Festival and International African Arts Festival) as well as African Liberation Day (ALD) celebrations. The details of their involvement in such activities will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

In their motivations to struggle on an international level, the Black Power-era cultural-nationalist women were similar (though not always physically or ideologically connected in direct ways) to many of the black female activists who came before them, such as the women of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races (ICWDR). With key National Association of Colored Women members such as Margaret Murray Washington, Mary Church Terrell, and Mary McLeod Bethune, the ICWDR was founded in the early 1920s within the context of the Women's Club and New Negro Movements. As with Black Power-era cultural-nationalist women, Pan-Africanist sentiment shaped the ICWDR. The group researched,

⁷⁴ St. Julien, *Upon the Shoulders of Elephants We Reach the Sky*, 3.

⁷⁵ Tamisha Peterson explained that her grandparents were Garveyites. Peterson interview.

⁷⁶ Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-Journeying: Creating a Sacred Space in Education," (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2003), 193; Bright interview; Alberta Hill, "All-African Women's Conference Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania," *Black News*, November 1, 1972, Thulani Davis Collection. Manuscripts Archives and Rare Books Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

distributed information, and advocated for people of color in countries from West Africa and the Caribbean to the Asian Pacific islands.⁷⁷ Researcher and activist, Eleanor Hinton Hoytt asserted that their work fell under the subject of what is now considered Africana Studies.⁷⁸ The women in the ICWDR were clearly genteel representatives of a different era than Black Power-cultural-nationalist women. ICWDR members espoused the politics of respectability with its value system centered on the middle class norms. Pan-African cultural nationalism inherently reflected a different ideological stance, valuing African and African-derived customs and often emphasizing racial unity and esteem across cultural and class differences. Women in the ICWDR represented themselves differently; however, they also had much in common. Scholars such as Teresa Zackodnik and Marc Gallecchio have put the short-lived ICWDR on record as an internationalist organization, yet there is also more to be done with providing details about rank-and-file Black Power cultural-nationalist women's internationalist impetus.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Zackodnik, *Recirculation*, 454; Letter from ICWDR to Du Bois, November 2, 1929, Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Web Du Bois Papers, accessed November 12, 2013, <http://oubliette.library.umass.edu/>; Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: Norton and Company, 1999), 134; Eleanor Hinton Hoytt, "International Council of Women of the Darker Races" in *Facts on File Encyclopedia of Black Women in America: Religion and Community*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (New York: Facts on File, 1997), 114-116.

⁷⁸ Hoytt, "International Council," 115.

⁷⁹ The ICWDR began in the early 1920s and lasted about a decade. Rouse notably puts the ICWDR under the banner of vindicationism. Zackodnik, 454. Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 40-41; Rouse, "Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee," 40.

2.6 *“They didn’t fit the script”: Reading Radical Movement Ideals onto the Activist Impulse*⁸⁰

Pan-African cultural-nationalist women of the Black Power-era did not fit a simplistic script. They were not solely invisibilized and marginalized, but they were also the hypervisibilized, victimized women with whom various cultural-nationalist men had to regularly “contend.” They were not merely women who privileged race work over gender considerations. Some also performed feminisms in unacknowledged ways and many grew into womanisms over time. As women who were stimulated to become activist by way of their vindicationist sentiment, civil rights and labor movement ideologies, as well as by local and international events, they were inspired by previous movements yet they were distinct. Specifically, CAP-affiliated women presented movement motivations that broke the mold in certain ways. Women involved in the various Congress of African People affiliates can, in a manner, be situated as radicals who, after exposure to such concepts as “triple oppression” recognized how complex their motivations for joining the movement were. Thus they must be considered women who, through accessing such traditions as cultural-nationalist literacy practices, came into new levels of consciousness about the complexities of race, class, and gender oppression. As such, their narratives depicted the fact that they joined the movement for many reasons, which were based on complex influences. From their questions about the limitations of capitalism to radical advocacy for self-defense tactics, they did not quite fit into a singular narrative.

⁸⁰ The guiding idea for the section was taken from Paula Marie Seniors, “She Didn’t Fit the Script, Radical Black Women Activists Mae Mallory, Mrs. Ethel Azalea Johnson, Audrey Proctor: Advocates of Civil Rights Through Self-Defense, Trotskyism, Maoism, and Cubanismo (1959-1987),” abstract for paper presented at the annual meeting of Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Richmond, VA, October 4, 2011.

Like their forerunners, whom Erik McDuffie characterized as black Left feminists, CAP-affiliated women recollected that they joined the movement as critics of capitalism. Like their foremothers such as Queen Mother Moore, and others who “understood how capitalism exploited black women as blacks, as mothers, and as workers,” they were activists at the crossroads of various Black Power manifestations, the Left, and iterations of feminism or womanism.⁸¹ They inherited and acted upon a unique mix of ideas.

Critiques of capitalism came up in several of the women’s recollections as sparks for their activism. For example, Rogers of the St. Louis CAP affiliate, recalled Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination and the ensuing uprising in Kansas City, Missouri as a turning point in terms of her level of seriousness in thinking about oppression and her own activism. She stated, “Believe me, these were just sort of the embryonic stages of really what it meant to even think or talk about transforming a capitalist society like the U.S.”⁸²

Other women like Jaribu Hill of the Newark, New Jersey CAP headquarters, engaged in a similar reading of class-consciousness back in time to analyze how conditions of her youth influenced her activism, which would blossom during her college years. Hill’s assessment of the part of her childhood spent with her divorced mother who had been a clerk, but was forced to quit the job which did not pay enough for a single mother to support herself and her children, reflected an understanding of how “capitalism exploited black women as blacks, as mothers, and

⁸¹ McDuffie, *Sojourning*, 87; Stephen Ward, “The Third World Women’s Alliance: Black Feminist Radicalism and Black Power Politics,” in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 131. I opted to use womanism in the plural sense because of the various strands, from Alice Walker’s womanism to Clenora Hudson-Weems’ *Africana Womanism*, and Tiamoyo Karenga and Chimbuko Tembo’s *Kawaida Womanism*.

⁸² Rogers interview.

as workers.”⁸³ The question of why Hill and her siblings lived in destitution in the world’s most affluent country came out of the struggles of her childhood. For example, Hill recalled, “Growing up in poverty did shape me and help me to understand some things that I might not have [otherwise] understood. Although, it did not necessarily teach me why I was in poverty, I had to learn *that* growing into adulthood and becoming a political woman.” Hill’s assessment of her young life was tinged with the class consciousness reflected in many CAP women’s narratives. “The privileged classes would have you thinking it’s because you are not accomplished or as they said back in the day, ‘You haven’t applied yourself,’” she explained. Pointing toward problems of structural inequality, Hill suggested, “We understand now what those systems are and what they require to keep going. . . . Now I understand the reason for my family being thrust into poverty when my mother became . . . single.”⁸⁴

Going beyond class consciousness, Hill’s statement reflected ideologies of intersecting forms of oppression. Knowledge of triple oppression was likely nurtured via CAP, which grew to advocate advancing the fight against triple oppression during the early to mid-1970s.⁸⁵ This position was influenced by the women’s growing Leftist affiliations through the organization.

The strain of CAP-affiliated women’s Left leanings went further back, at least ideologically. The connecting fibers were tied to McDuffie’s black feminists of such old Left affiliated women as Moore and Claudia Jones. In fact, he cited Claudia Jones as a leading

⁸³ Concerns about the impact of multiple forms of oppression on black, working-class and poor women were not new. McDuffie asserted that black, Left, feminists of an earlier era expressed similar concerns about tripartite oppression. McDuffie, *Sojourning*, 87.

⁸⁴ Hill interview.

⁸⁵ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 183; “Listen to the People” and “Black Women’s United Front—Forward with the Struggle!” *Unity and Struggle*, November 1975, Edition 1, *The Black Power Movement, Part 1*, Amiri Baraka, from *Black Arts to Black Radicalism* (Bethesda, Maryland: University Publications of America, 2001), microfilm.

Communist Party theoretician in the U.S. concerning the Negro Question and the Woman Question, as well as the premier black woman of the Old Left. More important in terms of a clear ideological connection to Jaribu Hill, Amina Baraka, and CAP, McDuffie pointed out that Claudia Jones propagated the ‘triple oppression’ concept within the postwar Communist Left.⁸⁶ It is unclear whether Jones’ writing fell directly into the hands of CAP women like Amina Baraka. It is possible that she could have been indirectly exposed to the concept of triple oppression through Pan-African cultural-nationalist literacy traditions or via interactions with Old Left women.⁸⁷

Old Left black feminism remained influential during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s.⁸⁸ McDuffie and Stephen Ward mentioned their influence on such groups as the Third World Women’s Alliance but did not consider cultural-nationalist groups as sites for contact with black female activists of the Old Left and emerging feminisms. Women who joined Black Power-era Pan-African cultural-nationalist groups may have initially perceived they were joining “race first” organizations, but their literacy practices and networks would lead some to recognize they joined the Black Freedom Struggle in response to multiple, intersecting forms of oppression.

Cultural-nationalist women of the Black Power Era were not a chronological anomaly. The organizational and ideological connections to activists like Queen Mother Moore and Fannie

⁸⁶ McDuffie, *Sojourning*, 7.

⁸⁷ A 1974 article indicated Amina Baraka and former Old Left activist Queen Mother Moore were in direct conversation; however, Moore had probably moved away from Leftist ideologies at the time. She asserted women’s role in the movement was supporting men, arguing corporeal difference necessitated functional variations. Conversely, Baraka asserted necessity should determine gender roles and that no concrete categories existed. “Workshop on Women in the Struggle,” *The African World*. July 1975, 5, *The Black Power Movement, Part I*, Amiri Baraka, from *Black Arts to Black Radicalism*, Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, Microfilm.

⁸⁸ Ward, “The Third World Women’s Alliance,” 131.

Lou Hamer, to ideologies like “race first,” vindicationism, efficient womanhood, and community feminism stimulated their activist tendencies. These connections also demonstrated that they descended from the multiple strains of the Black Freedom Struggle from classical black nationalism to civil rights, labor organizing, and radical movements.⁸⁹ Yet, it must be emphasized that, though the women remembered and understood their own activism within the frameworks of anteceding waves of the struggle, such as the Old Left, there were many Cold War-era “ruptures and fractures” influencing the tone and tenor of the struggle.⁹⁰ The black Left feminists of the 1920s and 1930s, for example, would affect the black feminists and the “New Communist Movement” of the 1970s. However, it has been proven that radical influence was minimized during the interim period of Cold War repression, and civil rights organizing gave way to strident forms of protest in the face of intractable and nebulous forms of oppression. Although there were underlying continuities between the different phases of the Long Black Freedom Struggle, cultural-nationalist activists of the Black Power era did not join a unified and cohesive movement for black freedom, but they would join Kwaumba-influenced groups like the Us Organization, Committee for a Unified Newark, The East, and Ahidiana during a period which was distinct in its influences and characteristics as discussed in the next chapter.

⁸⁹ McDuffie, *Sojourning*, 203.

⁹⁰ Sundiata Cha Jua and Clarence Lang, “The ‘Long Movement’ as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies,” *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 271.

3 “BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS . . . ROLLED STRONG”: HOW THE 1960S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CLIMATE SHAPED PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL-NATIONALIST WOMEN’S ACTIVIST MOTIVATIONS¹

On June 17, 1966, almost a year after a violent uprising against persistent inequality and police brutality had rocked the black neighborhood of Watts in Los Angeles, hundreds of peaceful protestors in the Meredith March Against Fear entered the Delta town of Greenwood, Mississippi en route from Memphis to Jackson. Late in the day, Stokely Carmichael, SNCC chairman and one of several march leaders, was arrested for the twenty-seventh time. After he was released that evening, Carmichael addressed the large group of people who were gathering to take a stand against the pervasive violence of white supremacists and encourage black citizens to register and vote. Frustrated with the petty harassment meant to cause attrition within the movement, he declared, “I ain’t going to jail no more. The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin’ us . . . is to take over! We been sayin’ ‘Freedom Now’ for six years and we ain’t got nothing. What we gonna start sayin’ now is ‘*Black Power!*’” Several times, he raised the cry, “What do we want?” The crowd roared back each time, “*Black Power!!!*”² Although this was not the first time the words had been uttered, the news media in attendance that scorching evening captured the highly-charged call to action, signaling to the entire nation that “Black Power” had arrived. Both the uprising and the march represented major turning points in the long struggle for freedom. The climate in black America had changed. The 1960s produced this

¹ The title of this chapter was derived from Amina Baraka’s longer statement about the 1960s and 1970s, “Black consciousness, it rolled. It rolled and it rolled strong.” Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

² Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 507; John Lewis with Michael D’Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 387-389.

atmosphere, which also shaped the unique worldview of the women who became cultural nationalists during the era.

The times were, in part, comprised of persistent post-World War II disfranchisement and continued racial violence (both physical and passive).³ Margo V. Perkins has characterized the strident black response as a “logical” reaction to the United States’ ongoing oppression of African Americans despite a long history of nonviolent social protest.⁴ While those who joined cultural-nationalist groups during the Black Power era had commonalities with activists from previous waves of the Long Black Freedom Struggle, their involvement emerged at a distinctive turning point, producing different outcomes. Peniel Joseph wrote about continuity. African-American Studies experts Sundiata Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, however, instructed scholars to heed the differences between Civil Rights and Black Power.⁵ Black Power formed a period of the struggle, which produced more militant leaders, goals that included community control, self-respect, self-defense, and self-determination, and new symbols such as the raised fist and the black panther. Many advocates sympathized with, supported, or had previously been involved with the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement. Yet when a new wave of activists such as Carmichael challenged nonviolent tactics and integrationist goals, some of the women who had

³ Joseph asserted racialized violence flourished in almost every corner of postwar America. He explained the brutality was manifested in two forms; “hidden” forms and the more self-explanatory “physical” type. Joseph defined the former as unequal educational, residential, judicial, and economic outcomes between whites and people of color. I selected author and activist, Arun Gandhi’s, language of “passive violence,” which refers to the same kinds of practices but Gandhi’s discourse extends the concept beyond covert actions while also encompassing unintentional deeds. Students for a Democratic Society co-founder, Tom Hayden, also opined racism was a form of violence which, he asserted, the entire white community in some way supported. Peniel Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xi; Nicholas C. Stern, “A Conversation with Arun Gandhi,” *The Frederick News Post*, June 9, 2012; Tom Hayden, *Rebellion in Newark: Official Violence and Ghetto Response* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 3.

⁴ Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), xi.

⁵ Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement*, 21.

connected with the previous expressions of the Black Freedom Struggle either changed or broadened their affiliations.

For example, Tamanika Howze, a former CAP Pittsburgh member, had recalled Carmichael, who was a “revolutionary icon” at the time. Her remembrances of Carmichael are significant.⁶ She had high regard for the Civil Rights Movement’s success in challenging legal segregation; however, she also communicated a nagging sense of the movement’s limitations in terms of addressing the continued economic inequality, ghettoization, and cultural subordination she experienced growing up in Pittsburgh. She said, “I believe in the whole concept . . . with the Civil Rights Movement. It was in the forefront of seeking justice and I value that greatly but then I became inspired by Kwame Ture. Then, he was Stokely Carmichael.” Howze went on to discuss the concerns spurring her activist sentiment stating, “I remember . . . it was always in my head about this whole justice thing and I just knew things weren’t right . . . for black folks.”⁷

Howze further explained that the pace of ameliorating racial inequality was far too slow. Such a viewpoint prompted her to seek new answers for lingering questions about the injustice she saw and experienced growing up African American in northern, working-class, neighborhoods. Howze (then Donna McMichaux) emphasized that Carmichael spoke at a black-controlled institution—a local church.⁸ Howze said, “I remember I had a job when I was in high school and I was in the eleventh grade, I believe, and I had heard that he was going to be

⁶ Joseph positioned Stokely Carmichael as Malcolm X’s most likely successor at the time. Additionally, the historian makes a similar claim about Carmichael as is apparent in the Pan-African cultural-nationalist women’s self-narratives. That is, the public imagines the activists as distant from the Civil Rights Movement, which was ironically a key factor in shaping them (both in its triumphs and limitations). Peniel Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: BasicCivitas Books: 2014),

⁷ Tamanika Howze, telephone interview by author, January 19, 2014.

⁸ East Avenue High School Year Book, *Life*, 1967, 33, accessed January 28, 2015, <http://www.donslist.net/PGHLookups/FifthAvHS1967M.htm>.

speaking at Ebenezer Baptist Church, which was one of the more historical churches in Pittsburgh. . . . So, he spoke at Ebenezer here in The Hill District and I got off work and I went to see him and I thought he was electrifying.”⁹ Howze’s memories illustrated that the budding cultural-nationalist women who came of age during the post-World War II era held values that overlapped those of the Civil Rights Movement in certain places, but which were distinct in other key areas. For instance, many worked to achieve black participation in the American political process, and still advocated for such tactics as focusing on community control, rather than integration, and armed self-defense instead of nonviolent resistance.¹⁰

Moreover, understanding the shifting contexts of Tamanika Howze’s Pittsburgh locale sheds light on her attraction to such modern Black Nationalist tenets as community control—the kinds Carmichael and, later, the Congress of African People espoused, particularly as related to the Kwaunda tenet *kujichagulia* or self-determination. Howze lived in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. During the first half of the twentieth century, “The Hill” was an ethnically-diverse neighborhood attracting a tide of Southern black migrants during World War I. In the interwar years, the area became an African-American hub bustling with businesses and cultural attractions from jazz bars to a Negro League baseball club. During the post-World War II 1950s, however, urban renewal programs caused more than a third of the black population to move to housing projects, spurring increased crime rates, residential flight, and divestment of businesses and services. These phenomena contributed to the community’s overall blight. During a study on the consequences of Hill-area urban renewal, Howze lamented the sense of loss she felt as the neighborhood

⁹ Howze, interview; *New Pittsburgh Courier*, Photographs of Stokely Carmichael’s visit to Ebenezer Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, March 11, 1967, 1; Charley Scales. “Gridder Charley Scales Comments: Light, Dark Question almost Gets Carmichael Meet Unruly,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 11, 1967, 3.

¹⁰ Howze, interview.

decayed and fragmented. The author of the study reported Howze was a staunch activist, seeking to preserve and renew “The Hill.” Moreover, the researcher said Howze was “adamant” about claiming the neighborhood as “home.”¹¹ This helps explain her attraction to principles advocating “control over [black] lives, politically, economically and psychically” as opposed to those espousing the proposition of an interracial, beloved community which never materialized.¹² This was particularly true in Howze’s Pittsburgh neighborhood, which underwent white and affluent out-migration during the post-World War II era.

Circumstances like those Howze experienced stood in contrast to Civil Rights Movement goals, which generally focused on achieving full black social, political, and economic inclusion in the United States. Cha-Jua and Lang explained that civil rights denoted equal access to privileges the state confers upon its citizens, and safeguards against unjustifiable violation by either the state or private citizens. The authors also stressed that, in another vein, Black Power drew its defining characteristics from an array of Black Nationalist traditions. The ideology was heterogeneous in its expressions. Its scope of activities encompassed many forms attractive to women like Tamanika Howze, from community control and institutional autonomy to Black Studies curricula, entrepreneurship, alternative religious practices, artistic expression, land-based reparations campaigns, electoral politics, prison reform, self-determination, dignity and jobs for the poor, and women’s rights consciousness-raising.¹³

¹¹ Howze, interview; Bob Bauder, “Many Fear Pittsburgh’s Hill District Will Never Reach another Zenith,” *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*, February 24, 2014, accessed May 18, 2014, Newspaper Source Database, EBSCOhost, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/>; Mindy Thompson Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (New York: One World/Ballantine, 2004), 165 and 190.

¹² Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), xv.

¹³ Cha-Jua and Lang, “The ‘Long Movement’ as Vampire,” 274.

Black Power theorists sometimes criticized integration as a process that addressed unequal access but still facilitated white society's maintenance of power and dominance.¹⁴ Not viewing integration as a necessary precondition for racial equality, cultural nationalists focused on creating independent institutions, stressing African Americans' distinct cultural ethos, and emphasizing psychological independence.¹⁵ As demonstrated in this section, such traits were shaped by the conditions of WWII, the post-war era, and Civil Rights Movement, which shifted the mood and leadership of the freedom struggle. However, such features also reflected the rising influence of the Nation of Islam, the largest and most influential Black Nationalist organization of the era. Elements of the NOI fostered an awareness of Black Nationalism for several of the cultural-nationalist women participating in this study, yet the organization's characteristics, from religious emphasis and lack of direct political action to restrictive female gender roles, would also send the women in search of other activist outlets.

3.1 Turning toward Muhammad: The Influence of the Nation of Islam

Historian Jeffery Ogbar wrote, "In trying to explain the development of a new African-American identity in the second half of the century, one has to understand the Black Power movement, and to explain Black Power, one must come to grips with the Nation of Islam." He further stated that the NOI's separatism stood as an apparent contrast to the civil rights message of inclusion.¹⁶ The NOI served as an important influence on the new generation of activists

¹⁴ Malcolm X, "Basic Unity Program: Organization of Afro-American Unity," in *Modern Black Nationalism: From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan*, ed. William L. Van Deburg (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 114.

¹⁵ East Organization member Tamisha Peterson clearly expressed this sentiment in her interview when she said, "Integration, it did not hold any appeal. I just didn't feel that for us to be validated that we had to do it vis-à-vis a white counterpart." Peterson, interview.

¹⁶ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 2 and 37.

coming of age during the Black Power era. Founded during the Depression Era, the NOI can be understood as the connective tissue between nationalists of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century and black activists.¹⁷ Ogbar illustrated the NOI was the most influential organization and greatest benefactor of the Black Power Movement, causing cultural shifts which, in turn, influenced identity formation in the U.S. He outlined that the organization drew upon the storied traditions of the Black Freedom Struggle, but at the same time, compelled African Americans to think and discuss salient issues in new ways. At its core, the NOI was a religious-nationalist organization both because of its belief that Allah would destroy white rule over black people as well as its demands for land and support from the descendants of slaveholders for building a black nation-state. However, pending a separate nation or an apocalypse ending white domination, NOI members developed independent community institutions from schools to apartments; thus, providing spaces for “moral, cultural, and material” self-definition and self-help.¹⁸ The Nation was similar to its Black-Nationalist precursors in key ways. For instance, constituents considered the organization the true representative of black interests.¹⁹ The NOI and previous Black Nationalist strains similarly emphasized racial consciousness and self-determination although leaders and participants often saw race in different ways. Moreover, the Nation forwarded notions about the negative impact of slavery similar to those Garvey previously expressed.²⁰

¹⁷ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 18-19.

¹⁸ E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), vii.

¹⁹ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 3.

²⁰ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 18.

The Nation was in many ways different from middle-class organizations of previous Long Black Freedom Struggle phases. For instance, the Black Muslims were unlike such civil rights groups as the NAACP and the National Urban League insofar as the NOI, methodically recruited from working and poor sectors of the African-American community, more in the style of the UNIA. The NOI crafted its message for the black masses.²¹ This emphasis on reaching working-class and poor African-Americans appealed to many women who would become Black Power-era cultural nationalists and enact such values through their own activism. For instance, Amina Baraka expressed appreciation for movements that included people like her tenacious family and community members. She was from the notoriously fierce Howard Street, which she said was populated by proud, working-class people who navigated living among an infamous group of pimps, prostitutes, and drug dealers.²² She said, “My grandfather and my grandmother and my mama, they worked, they worked. I told you they worked. They were not hoes. They [were] not bitches. They [were] not pimps. They [were] not none of that and they wouldn’t allow us to be it. They would die and go to hell first.”²³ As the NOI would have been concerned with reaching all the people on Howard Street, so would Amina Baraka develop a nationalist consciousness concerned with reaching the black masses.²⁴

Another attractive feature informing Black Power-era cultural nationalism was the NOI’s concern for black self-identity. For example, The Nation’s members were in the vanguard group of African Americans who rejected the terms “Negro” and “colored” in favor of the word

²¹ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 3.

²² Here, Amina Baraka was referring to the characters depicted in Nathan C. Heard, *Howard Street* (New York: Dial Press, 1968).

²³ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

²⁴ Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 239.

“black.” According to their assessment, black represented the opposite of white and embraced a collective racial identity, which included people of varying skin tones and nationalities.²⁵ For members of the Nation, such words were loaded with meaning and symbolized elements of the African-American liberation struggle.²⁶

As a graduate student, Karenga is reported to have met with the NOI’s foremost spokesperson at the time, Malcolm X, whenever the minister visited the Los Angeles mosque. According to Scot Brown, Karenga recalled working to bring Malcolm to lecture at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1962, where he reiterated the message that African Americans had been stripped of their culture in terms of naming practices, language, and religion. Karenga particularly agreed with the Nation’s critique of Christianity as an element supporting slavery, colonialism, and empire. Many NOI doctrines would make their way into cultural-nationalist women’s lives via Kawaida ideologies and practices, for example, in the complete lifestyle change required when adherents reached full Us membership. Advocates changed their dress, hairstyles, diets, speech patterns, values, and daily habits when they became members of the Us Organization.²⁷

Headquartered in Chicago with mosques in several U.S. cities, the NOI reached would-be cultural-nationalists in various regions of the country. In the South, the organization indirectly influenced some women who would gravitate to Ahidiana during the Black Power era. Nana Anoa Nantambu said her father, fond of reading, picked up NOI literature in New Orleans and

²⁵ Brown explained that blackness reflected a “binary opposition” to whiteness in NOI ideology. He wrote that whiteness represented a “pan-European” identity, which was “formed out of a collective opposition to Africans in America and other people of color in the United States and the diaspora.” Brown, *Fighting for US*, 20.

²⁶ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 3.

²⁷ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 18-20.

shared it with his family. The Black Muslims gathered near the intersection of Fourth and Magnolia Street near the eponymous housing projects beginning in the 1940s. In the area, they sold reading material, particularly the *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper. Explaining her father's effect on her thinking about identity, Nantambu stated, "My father grounded me." Specifying one of his literary influences was the Nation, she went on to explain that he read Black Muslim literature.²⁸

In the northeast, Amina Baraka described a seemingly ubiquitous Newark NOI. Many of her peers affiliated with the group and, like Nantambu's father, read their books, pamphlets, and newspapers. Amina Baraka explained NOI literature was important reading in the early Black Power-era 1960s. She recalled discussing NOI philosophies with members of the Spirit House collective, who she described as, "actors who were politically conscious." She continued stating, "You remember the first books that Elijah Muhammad put out, *The Message to the Black Man*, meaning the message to black people here in North America?" she asked. "He never said he was involved with the Sunni Muslims [or] the Muslims worldwide." Insinuating Elijah Muhammad's ideas spoke specifically to Black Americans, she expounded, "He was talking about the Muslims here in North America. He was kind of like Garvey or someone and he did these things and it appealed to us. . . . So, we went through that track." Amina Baraka punctuated her recollections of the NOI's influence by explaining that she and fellow activist-artists engaged NOI philosophies for a while before incorporating others into their own ideas and work.²⁹

Amina Baraka's narrative also revealed the NOI's popularity among various inhabitants of the neighborhood where she grew up. Under Elijah Muhammad and

²⁸ Nana Anoa Nantambu, interview.

²⁹ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

Malcolm X, the organization's best known and most prolific minister, the Nation became the largest African-American nationalist organization by the late 1950s.³⁰ Amina Baraka personally experienced these realities. Amidst what the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) termed "consistent" NOI activity in New Jersey, membership steadily increased from 1958-1968.³¹ Amina Baraka recalled, "Here in Newark, Mosque Number 25, I went to school with a lot of these people. . . . They were on the street. They had been in jail for murder. They had been in jail for raping. They had been in jail for some of everything." Baraka went on to state that the Nation of Islam under the aegis of Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X attracted and converted many individuals in her community. She indicated that she became loosely affiliated with the Nation, "I tried to do that and I did do it up until the Nation split."³²

Likewise, one of Amina Baraka's protégés, Maisha Sullivan Ongoza, of the Congress of African People's Philadelphia affiliate, Urban Survival Training Institute (USTI), described the NOI's indirect influence on her by way of Shirley 7X, who was her older sister. Ongoza discussed how the Nation shaped her subsequent attraction to Black Power activism in general and to cultural nationalism specifically. She was only two years old when her mother died. Her sister Shirley, who was ten years her senior, therefore, became a mother figure. Shirley joined the NOI when Ongoza (then known as Maxine) was in middle school. Maisha Ongoza described herself as not very religious; thus, she never wanted to be a Muslim. However, her sister's positive lifestyle changes regarding her discipline, maturity, and diet made an impression on her.

³⁰ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 12; Esseien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 68-74.

³¹ Memorandum, Newark Special Agent in Charge to FBI Director, April 2, 1968, Federal Bureau of Investigation, COINTELPRO, Black Extremists, Part 2.

³² Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

Shirley sometimes took young Maxine to the mosque where she had a chance to witness Malcolm X in action.³³ Ongoza said, “I actually got a chance to hear Malcolm X when he was the minister here in Philadelphia. I didn’t know who he was then. You know, this was before he got national but my sister always reminded me that I got to see and meet Malcolm when he was just a minister here in Philadelphia, but I was young.”³⁴ Although she was too young to clearly remember her interactions with Malcolm X, the fact that Ongoza brought him up in her recollections underscored his importance as a touchstone in the women’s Black Power-era activist memories.

Ongoza’s narrative further highlighted the significance of NOI literature in shaping her activist outlook. She said newspapers were everywhere in Shirley’s home because her husband sold *Muhammad Speaks*, the organization’s monthly publication, which began in 1960.³⁵ Explaining what must have been a precursor to the literacy traditions that would later blossom in cultural-nationalist circles, Ongoza stated, “I was reading the papers a lot and it was exposing me to different things from around the world. Later on she would have *Black Panther* newspapers in her house too. Her husband would be reading it. So, because of my sister, I got exposed to this issue around Black Power with the Nation of Islam.”³⁶

³³ Malcolm X lectured at various East-Coast temples including Philadelphia (Temple Number Twelve) in 1954-1955. Ula Taylor, “Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam: Separatism, Regendering, and Secular Approach to Black Power after Malcolm X (1965-1975) in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* edited by Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 180.

³⁴ Ongoza, interview.

³⁵ Jamie J. Wilson, “‘Come Down off the Cross and Get Under the Crescent’: The Newspaper Columns of Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X,” *Biography* 36, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 494.

³⁶ Ongoza, interview. Peniel Joseph wrote about the cosmopolitanism of postwar Black radical literature, stating it “deepened black knowledge of the outside world.” Joseph, ed., *Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, 12.

Ongoza's experience also points to young activists' desires for different kinds of guidance than the NOI offered. "I never wanted to join [the NOI]," she said. "Something about it never made me want to join. I had one younger sister who joined for a while but I never had an interest in joining. Even though I admired my sister immensely. . . . I never wanted to become a Muslim."³⁷ Ongoza appreciated the aspects of the NOI's program that addressed improvement of personal behaviors and forwarded self-help initiatives, while also searching for organizations which offered greater challenges to the kinds of systemic racism she experienced in her daily life. Her narrative reflected similar sentiments as those Ogbar expressed when he wrote, "The Nation of Islam . . . was not a particularly radical or even progressive organization. . . . While it offered a vituperative rebuke of white supremacy, it provided little in the way of direct challenge to the white power structure." He further underscored the point by stating that, on one hand, members of "the black community still held Muslims in high esteem for their upright, industrious, sober, and disciplined character." On the other hand, "the Nation's cautious and conservative policies fell short of making a viable organization of black liberation" in the eyes of other African Americans.³⁸

Ongoza's personal account revealed that the key events influencing her affinity for a more politically-engaged kind of activism were participation in and assistance with organizing a mass demonstration of Philadelphia students aimed at increasing their access to quality, culturally-competent education. The protest took place in November 1967, about eighteen months after she graduated from high school, a period when she was actively involved in

³⁷ Maisha Ongoza, email correspondence, January 17, 2014. Maisha Ongoza, telephone interview by author, January 13, 2014.

³⁸ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 194.

community activism.³⁹ During the demonstration, more than 3,500 Philadelphia students walked out of classes and gathered at the city's Board of Education headquarters at Twenty-First Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. They called for reforms such as better schools for all children in the city as well as curriculum changes to end tracking and incorporate Black Studies.

Ongoza recalled how law enforcement attacked the young protestors during the incident. According to historian Matthew Countryman, one local newspaper described the mood of the protesting students as lighthearted and festive. Another newspaper article indicated that school board president Richardson Dilworth cited the police for inciting disorder among school children who had otherwise been engaged in a controlled demonstration. Baton-wielding police officers barreled into the crowd of students under the command of the controversial, "law-and-order" police commissioner Frank L. Rizzo. Many were newly deputized and in full riot gear. Approximately thirty participants were treated for injuries that day. Ongoza said witnessing the violent police strike against the young demonstrators inspired her to join an organization that she believed could help make a difference in her community.⁴⁰

Soon after, Ongoza joined USTI. A subgroup of the Philadelphia Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) at the time, USTI became a CAP affiliate in 1970.⁴¹ Kawaïda principles guided

³⁹ Matthew Countryman, "'From Protest to Politics': Community Control and Black Independent Politics in Philadelphia, 1965-1984," *Journal of Urban History* 32, (2006): 825.

⁴⁰ Frank L. Rizzo's "law-and-order" approach to policing appealed to Philadelphia's middle- and working-class, white, ethnic sector in the context of 1960s urban uprisings. In addition to serving five years as police commissioner (1967-1972), Rizzo was also a two-term mayor (1972-1980). Because of his use of repressive tactics, which included surveillance and raids on local the Black Panther Party and SNCC offices, various African Americans (including imprisoned activist and journalist, Mumia Abu Jamal) would cite Rizzo for police brutality and racial bias. Ongoza, interview; Countryman, "'From Protest to Politics,'" 825, 827, 834, 837, 838, & 840-842; "Philadelphia Seizes 57 in Negro Rioting," *New York Times*, November 18, 1967, 1; "Philly Ready to Put Down Recurrence of Weekend Violence," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 21, 1967, 21; Dennis Hevesi, "Frank Rizzo of Philadelphia Dies at 70; A 'Hero' and 'Villain,'" *New York Times*, July 17, 1991; Mumia Abu-Jamal, *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004), 73 & 194.

⁴¹ As author of a series of articles in a local, black newspaper, Bill Mathis was cited as Philadelphia CORE chairman and director (1965), an USTI founder (1968), and CAP co-chair. Bill Mathis, "'Black Nationalism.'—What It

USTI, and her experience there served as an introduction to the philosophy.⁴² Elucidating the reason she eschewed key civil rights tactics, especially nonviolence, Ongoza said the activists in USTI “were talking stuff a little bit more serious . . . than the civil rights and nonviolence, because after what the police did to us, I thought we needed to be able to defend ourselves. I didn’t want to do anything that said you couldn’t fight back and protect yourself.”⁴³ Ongoza’s ideas generally pointed to reasons some activists selected Black Nationalism over civil rights tactics and how she was specifically introduced to Kawaida philosophies. Moreover, while the NOI was an early alternative to more assimilationist civil rights ideologies, the shortcomings of its strong religious focus and lack of political action created in some young activists the desire for different leadership.⁴⁴ They sought more support as a new generation of activists with different experiences, new goals, and louder demands for self-defense. As a young woman witnessing a demonstration during which police rushed, clubbed, and arrested school-aged participants, Maisha Ongoza searched for a philosophy more suited to what she believed were her community’s pressing needs. As a result, she was introduced to Kawaida, with its critiques of

Means,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 5, 1972, 1: USTI was listed as one of the Philadelphia organizations represented at the CAP September 3-7, 1970 founding session in Atlanta, Georgia. Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) ed., *African Congress: A Documentary of the First Modern Pan-African Congress* (New York: William Morrow, 1972), 469.

⁴² Keith Mayes noted that the founders of USTI were Yokoba Tubiani, a Kawaida *kasisi* (priest), Reginald Mtumishi, Maisha Sullivan Ongoza, and her husband Kauli Ongoza [now deceased]. Mayes also defined the group as a Kawaida cultural-nationalist formation. Keith A. Mayes, *Kwanzaa: Black Power and the Making of the African-American Holiday Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 126; Both Ongoza and Komozi Woodard indicated that Ongoza headed the organization at one time. Woodard recorded one other female leader of a CAP affiliate, Dalila Kudura of Albany [New York]. Ongoza, interview; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 169 and 285; “CAP Spreads Across the Nation!!,” *Unity and Struggle*, December 1974, 16.

⁴³ Ongoza, interview.

⁴⁴ Some considered NOI ideology part of the older, Islamic-oriented Black Nationalist tradition which “criticized ‘the White man’ with rhetoric rather than political activity that would confront American polity.” Akinyele K. Umoja, “From Malcolm X to Omowale Malik Shabazz: The Transformation and Its Impact on the Black Liberation Struggle,” in *Malcolm X: A Historical Reader*, eds. James L. Conyers, Jr. and Andrew P. Smallwood (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), 32.

pacifism and open espousal of self-defense. The local Philadelphia CORE affiliate adopted the philosophy during the late 1960s as the organization turned toward Black Power philosophies.⁴⁵

The Nation of Islam and its members influenced certain women's activism but grew to be insufficient for others who would join cultural-nationalist organizations during the Black Power era. According to the women's narratives, many sought more politically-engaging leadership, and they searched beyond groups that focused heavily on religious doctrine, personal uplift, and self-help. Taken together, their narratives mirror Scot Brown's assessment that many activists believed the new movement of the mid-1960s needed leaders beyond those affiliated with the Nation. According to Brown, several key events in 1965 reinforced this idea among West Coast activists. The first was Malcolm X's assassination in February; the other incident was the Watts Uprising in August. Brown theorized that among youthful California-based activists, the two events were closely connected. Additionally, he asserted the NOI, as a religious group, had not taken the type of political stand required to meet young activists' demands for self-defense and armed resistance in the aftermath of Watts. The women involved in this study who became part of cultural-nationalist organizations in other regions of the country reflected similar sentiments.⁴⁶

Rod Bush's work stressed comparable ideas. Paraphrasing Africana Studies scholar William Sales, Jr., Bush wrote, "The significance of the Nation of Islam was that it articulated a mission of racial redemption similar in many ways to that of the Garvey movement of the 1920s . . . Like [Booker T.] Washington they did not engage in agitation, but emphasized 'doing for self.'" Bush went on to explain that Black Muslims under the aegis of Elijah Muhammad

⁴⁵ For more information on Philadelphia CORE's turn to Black Power, see Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 205.

⁴⁶ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 21-22.

refrained from social protest, because of the belief that “Allah would deliver the Lost-Found Nation from the ‘white devils.’” He opined that, despite the NOI’s relative conservatism, the organization did more to fundamentally question the basic white-supremacist paradigm than did liberal integrationists. He asserted, however, other groups that ideologically centered Africa and enacted policies of political engagement did more to forward the Black Nationalist cause.⁴⁷ Both Brown’s and Bush’s theories aligned with many of the women’s narratives explaining why, in certain instances, the NOI was not sufficient for those who would become cultural nationalists in Kwaiaida-influenced organizations during the Black Power era.

3.2 *Loving People and Nation “By Any Means Necessary”*

The NOI was influential as a mass organization; however, in his own right, Malcolm X (Omowale Malik Shabazz or El Hajj Malik El Shabazz) helped set the tone for Black Power and cultural nationalism more than any other individual.⁴⁸ Just as the NOI was different from movements within the Black Freedom Struggle that fought for African Americans’ equal rights via litigation, political action, and nonviolent social protest, scholars have also pointed out the Islamic-oriented NOI was part of an older, “fundamental” Black Nationalist tradition focused more on antiwhite rhetoric and self-help than direct action. Thus, Malcolm’s expanding role as a black liberation leader intent on more insurgent forms of political action and his position as an NOI minister eventually became incompatible. Likewise, according to some of the women’s narratives in this study, many young nationalists searched for black liberation ideologies

⁴⁷ Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 186.

⁴⁸ Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement*, 9.

supporting more political engagement and expanded spiritual practices beyond or in addition to the NOI. After Malcolm X's break with the Nation of Islam, the influential leader forwarded new models for Black Nationalism, key characteristics of which provided impetus for a number of 1960s Black Power activists to join the movement or change activist affiliations, thus, shaping their values and organizing methods.⁴⁹ The popularity of such models partially grew out of the fact that Malcolm was transformed into a symbol and imprinted upon activists' memories as a reference point or an archetype of the new Black Power militancy in the aftermath of his assassination on February 21, 1965.⁵⁰ Influencing many cultural nationalists' growing consciousness, Malcolm is remembered as a catalyst for young activists during the various phases of his life and most especially in death. The women's narratives analyzed for this study reflected several themes related to Malcolm's appeal and ideals including, but not limited to, his resonance with urban dwellers, celebration of continental African culture, naming practices and self-reinvention, affirmation of black beauty, advocacy for liberative education, and black nationalism. The women also expressed the influence of anticolonial liberation movements around the world, a topic that was important to Malcolm X. Upon examining the ways the women's work was catalyzed by, and reflected expressions of, Malcolm's legacy, it becomes evident that they were not completely marginalized and operating solely within a male-dominated context. When they joined the movement, they became part of the larger body of male

⁴⁹ Umoja, "From Malcolm X to Omowale Malik Shabazz," 31.

⁵⁰ Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., ed., *Is it Nation Time?: Contemporary Essays on Black Power and Black Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 3; William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2.

and female activists who carried on Malcolm's work, promoted his memory, and spread his ideology among a new wave of activists after his assassination.⁵¹

Malcolm X possessed a certain wide-ranging appeal. From incarcerated individuals to homemakers and professionals in the North and South, his message resonated with African Americans from various walks of life. Having toured Alabama and engaged with Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) workers, Malcolm X helped accelerate the growth of militancy in key Southern Civil Rights Movement areas; yet, his ideas became particularly popular with African Americans in the North.⁵² This appeal was partially because, in the face of the country's limited commitment to full equality, the Civil Rights Movement was stunted in its ability to address persistent issues of de facto segregation, poverty, unemployment, and police brutality in the region.

As Shukuru Sanders of The East looked back on the times influencing her activist choices, she remembered the Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King, Jr. as important but Malcolm X appealed to her specifically as a black New Yorker. Sanders said, "In New York, a lot of us felt closer to Brother Malcolm. He was somebody who was right there on the streets of Harlem. He'd come to Brooklyn. People knew him, knew his organization, had worked with him and he was somebody who spoke more clearly and more directly to issues that had affected people of color in the New York area, especially the African-American community."⁵³

⁵¹ McDuffie and Woodard have underscored the importance of analyzing women as entities who influenced Malcolm X and carried his legacy. The authors wrote about Louise Little, Vicki Garvin, Queen Mother Moore, and Betty Shabazz. McDuffie and Woodard, "If You're in a Country That's Progressive, the Woman is Progressive," 529 and 532.

⁵² Umoja, "From Malcolm X to Omowale Malik Shabazz," 6.

⁵³ Sanders, interview.

Both ideologically and pragmatically, East members such as Sanders considered themselves part of Malcolm X's "family lineage."⁵⁴ East associates were exposed to such female activists as Queen Mother Moore and Malcolm's widow, Betty Shabazz, who both helped shape his ideas and carry his flame.⁵⁵ Moreover, the books *Malcolm X on Afro-American History* and *Garvey, Lumumba and Malcolm* were required East reading.⁵⁶ Constituents saw organizational literature, paraphernalia, and commemorative activities stressing the slain leader's importance as a hero and ideological guide. For instance, the cover of the *East Worker's Manual* displayed his picture and name alongside other male leaders. *Uhuru Sasa Shule* students' uniforms were emblazoned with his photo. *Black News* frequently contained quotes, commentary, and artwork featuring Malcolm's image and personal testimony on his importance, particularly his ideals as implemented through *Uhuru Sasa School*.⁵⁷ Additionally, The East sponsored Malcolm X commemorations beginning in 1970 and celebrations of his life were annually held in Brooklyn for decades.⁵⁸ A 1975 memorial publication from one of the commemorations stated that organizers presented the document as a "testament to the influence that this MAN, Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik Shabazz) has had on those who represent the future" (emphasis from original).

⁵⁴ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 130.

⁵⁵ McDuffie and Woodard, "If You're in a Country That's Progressive, the Woman is Progressive," 533; Queen Mother Moore spoke at a Northeast regional CAP conference, which the East and the Black Studies department of City College co-hosted. "Highlights of the Northeast Regional Congress of Afrikan People (CAP) Conference," *Fundisha* 1: no. 6, 8 in *Black News* 2, no. 11 (December 11, 1973).

⁵⁶ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 125 and 143-144.

⁵⁷ Letter to the editor, *Black News* 2, no. 17, (December 11, 1973). 28.

⁵⁸ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 32; As a testament to East members' value for women as perpetuators of Malcolm's legacy, it should be noted that radical activist, Mae Mallory, received an award at a 1978 East commemoration for Malcolm X. Mallory was a civil rights advocate and close associate of militant Monroe, North Carolina NAACP chapter leader, Robert F. Williams. She was honored for "present and past contributions in continuing and promoting the principles of Black liberation struggles and Black empowerment which Malcolm X undauntedly worked and eventually died for." "Plan Big Brooklyn Tribute to Malcolm X," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 18, 1978, B1.

Additional content reflected Betty Shabazz, an accomplished woman in her own right, perpetuating her husband's legacy by disseminating commemorative awards in his honor at an East-sponsored function.⁵⁹ Such were Sanders' East-based influences as related to Malcolm X.

It can be asserted that, in certain ways, Shukuru Sanders' work was indirectly reflective of Malcolm's legacy. Throughout the 1970s, Sanders served in various capacities at The East. She recounted that her experience with the organization began when she was a parent volunteer for *Uhuru Sasa* school. She later took on various other roles. For instance, Sanders helped employ what Malcolm called the "power of print" by assisting with making Black Nationalist perspectives available for African-American readers via *Black News*. Sanders remembered laying out articles, typesetting, and transcribing pieces for The East's circular. She also created artwork that was featured in East media. Sanders eventually extended her efforts by participating in educational programs meant to engage local students during summers, thus embodying Malcolm's legacy of community uplift.⁶⁰

In terms of esteem for continental African culture, Malcolm X's ideologies contained components stressing the need to embrace African roots and emphasizing the importance of connecting to aspects of culture muted or extinguished through enslavement. The appropriate cultural orientation was thought to imbue people of African descent with pride and knowledge of their long history, thus, fortifying the freedom struggle. As a result, oppressed black people would theoretically gain the necessary confidence to implement their own course in the world

⁵⁹ *Mashariki Mfan Ya Kazi Mikono*, cover, 12, and 13; Konadu, *A View from The East*, dust jacket; Sayeed Abdul Salim, *The 10th Year Memorial: El Hajj Malik Shabazz Malcolm X* (1975), 3, Martha Bright papers, private collection; Jitu Weusi, "Dates and Activities You Should Support," *Black News* 2, no. 8 (June 2, 1973): 16.

⁶⁰ Sanders, interview; *The First Book of Kwanza: An East Publication* (Brooklyn: The EAST Publications, 1975), cover; Bright, interview; The term "the power of print" is Malcolm's wording for discussing news columns and papers as means of circulating nationalist messages within black communities. Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 338.

and develop their “African personality.”⁶¹ Moreover, such work would allow cultural reintegration among African-descended people.⁶² Historian Keith Mayes has pointed out that those who perpetuated the Kwanzaa celebrations growing out of Kawaïda doctrine, often believed “the ubiquity of white cultural practices . . . oppressed them as thoroughly as had Jim Crow laws.”⁶³ To Malcolm X and those who used his legacy as a template for their own cultural-nationalist activism, developing and maintaining institutions and programs that perpetuated African-American history and culture were necessary activities for achieving complete black freedom.

Components of Malcolm’s vision of cultural reorientation can be seen in the fact that many female Black Power activists in this study engaged in such cultural resistance practices as naming, which is replacing or augmenting their birth names with traditional African and Muslim forms and bestowing such names on their children.⁶⁴ According to literary theorist Deborah Thompson, naming and re-envisioning selfhood represented personal and collective acts of agency in the face of the limitations placed on African-American identities. Thompson also added that men dominated the process of reconsidering racial identities within the larger context

⁶¹ Malcolm X, “Speech at the Founding Rally of the OAAU,” *Malcolm X, By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews, and a Letter*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 63.

⁶² Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 5.

⁶³ Mayes, *Kwanzaa*, xix.

⁶⁴ Born Malcolm Little, Malcolm’s name was changed to X and then Shabazz according to the practices of the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad gave Malcolm the Arabic name Malik. During his travels abroad, Malcolm adopted the name El-Hajj which was symbolic of his pilgrimage to Mecca in the tradition of orthodox Islam. I assert that the most notable naming practice in the context of explaining his belief in the importance of traditional African culture is Malcolm’s adoption of Omowale, which was not Arabic but Yoruba. The moniker meant “a child returns home.” The Yorubas are an ethnic group residing in Nigeria and students there gave Malcolm the name during his first trip to Africa. Adetayo Alabi, *Telling Our Stories: Continuities and Divergences in Black Autobiographies* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 121. Umoja, “From Malcolm X to Omowale Malik Shabazz,” 35.

of 1950s and 1960s patriarchy and heterosexism.⁶⁵ Certainly, the women lived in a heteronormative, patriarchal society and joined cultural-nationalist organizations subscribing to such gender norms. Their absence from the biographical record, marginalization in news coverage, and shadowy archival representation confirm this reality. However, Pan-African cultural-nationalist females initially navigated gender constructs that conservatively upheld black males as leaders and heads of households. Early on, they joined the movement with the purpose of subverting dominant racial hegemonies, for example, by recasting their own identities much in the tradition of Malcolm X.

Deborah Powell came to be known as Azizi while affiliated with Newark CFUN. “Everybody wanted an African name,” she said. “Arabic names were also included.” She added that, at the time, “very few people knew African languages and names.” So, Powell said, “people used to have copied papers with African and Arabic names.”⁶⁶

Examples of copied pamphlets containing names with associated meanings include the *Swahili Name Book* and *Reflections of the Sun* coloring book.⁶⁷ In *Reflections of the Sun*, the name information inside appeared alongside illustrations of women adorned and posed according to African-influenced aesthetics. Such a juxtaposition of images seemed to reinforce a practice

⁶⁵ Deborah Thompson, “Keeping up with the Joneses: The Naming of Racial Identities in the Autobiographical Writings of LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Hettie Jones, and Lisa Jones,” *College Literature* 29 (Winter 2002): 90.

⁶⁶ Azizi (Deborah) Powell, telephone interview by author, September 8, 2013.

⁶⁷ Committee for a Unified NewArk, *Swahili Name Book* (NewArk, New Jersey: Jihad Productions, 1971), 4 and 10, Manuscripts Archives and Rare Books Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA; African Free School, *Reflections of the Sun* (NewArk, New Jersey: Jihad Productions), 1972, Amina Baraka papers, private collection; According to a *Black News* ad, The East’s Uhuru Sasa School also produced a resource called *African Name Book*. As stated in the promotional, the book contained “names and their meanings for Ndugu (boys) and Hada (girls) from various countries in Africa.” Underscoring women’s centrality in naming practices, the advertisement stated that the “beautiful names” contained in the book were for “the beautiful children of black women.” *Black News*, 3 no. 4 (October-November 1975): 16.

similar to Malcolm's "affirmation of Black beauty."⁶⁸ The value of African-influenced naming and aesthetic processes was highlighted by the fact that the book encompassed teaching children a few feminine names and meanings.

The official CFUN organizational position on youth, according to the *Mumininas*, was that they were particularly important because they comprised the future black nation.⁶⁹ In CFUN, women were deemed especially important in the process of educating children. Such values thereby bolstered the idea that females were present in the processes of nation building and affirming racial identities, albeit within feminized roles that were framed as complementary to men's functions. According to baby naming ceremony instructions laid out in the *Swahili Name Book*, which was compiled with the help of several people, including a young woman named *Malaika Pendevu*, the male leader or *imamu* led the act of selecting baby names. However, women participated in racial identity work as key transmitters of such cultural practices. The *imamu* selected the names of newborns participating in the organization's *Zawadi* naming and gift-giving ceremony. He gave the name only to the mother. Mothers then had the job of announcing their babies' names to family and friends.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Griffin, "'Ironies of the Saint,'" 220-223.

⁶⁹ African Free School, *Reflections of the Sun*; According to a list of projected books for Jihad Productions, Amina Baraka was the author of *Reflections of the Sun*. List of Projected Books to Be Published by Jihad Productions, Congress of African People, Organizing Manual, 1972, Series V: Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History, Atlanta Fulton Public Library, Archives Unbound, February 19, 2017.

⁷⁰ Committee for a Unified NewArk, *Swahili Name Book*, 4 & 10, Manuscripts Archives and Rare Books Library, Emory University, Atlanta; Committee for Unified NewArk, "Marriage Ceremony" and "Ritual Celebrating the Birth of Our Children" instructions, n.d., *The Black power Movement, Part 1, Amiri Baraka, from Black Arts to Black Radicalism* (Bethesda, Maryland: University Publications of America, 2001), microfilm; Also see Scot Brown's assessment of how female Us founder, Sanamu Nyeusi, employed a practice usually reserved for Karenga alone through her naming of male members, Oliver Massengale-Heshimu and Charles Massengale-Sigidi. Brown asserted that Nyeusi's naming further served as a recruitment tool for the two men. Brown, *Fighting for US*, 41.

Scholars have noted that Malcolm X's naming practices accompanied his well-known processes of "reinvention," "actualization," or "identity transformation" and his autobiography confirms the theme of personal growth.⁷¹ Female East family members Aminisha (Weusi) Black and Maisha Angaza wrote, "the elegant musical and meaningful African names we chose changed the way we carried and thought of ourselves."⁷² Moreover, the women's narratives included in this study reflected similar patterns in which using African or Muslim names to replace or augment their own birth names showed personal reflection, growing political awareness, and life transitions. Although it should be stressed that Malcolm X was not the first African American to rename himself. Many African Americans took part in the renaming process during this era.⁷³ A minority of the interviewed women retained their birth names; thus, indicating the kinds of syncretic practices developing within the context of "unity without uniformity" in Kawaida-influenced organizations and through which members exercised a certain amount of freedom and agency. However, the vast majority carried augmented or changed versions, reflecting their beliefs in the connections between names, identity, and worldview.⁷⁴

⁷¹ The term reinvention implies the act of transforming some aspect of one's career, worldview, religious beliefs, or social identity. Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 10; Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, "From Malcolm Little to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, A Life of Revolutionary Transformation: Manning Marable's Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention," *Black Scholar* 41: no. 2 (Summer 2011): 15; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 50.

⁷² *The EAST Sisterhood*, 8.

⁷³ Thompson, "Keeping up with the Joneses," 90.

⁷⁴ Certain women expressed the desire to be called only by their African names in their recollections. For example, Nilima Mwendo (Ahidiana) changed her name in high school. She declined giving her birth name during the interview asserting that she has not gone by that name in many years. Jamala Rogers (WATU, CAP St. Louis) stated outright that taking an African name as part of her 1972 wedding ceremony "was a complete transformative thing." Mwendo, interview; Rogers, interview; Martha Bright and Segun Shabaka emphasized the idea of "unity without uniformity" in their interviews; Bright, interview; Shabaka, interview.

The overall purpose of naming and other such Black Power cultural practices represented a kind of liberation discourse for a “self-transforming people.”⁷⁵ According to Malcolm, “The real names of our people were destroyed during slavery.” He further explained, “The last name of my forefathers was taken from them when they were brought to America made slaves and then the name of the slave master was given. . . . We reject that name today and refuse it.”⁷⁶ Thus, the process of shedding “slave names” was an act of discarding markers of enslavement for titles that reflected nationalists’ revised views of themselves as well as their heritage and future.⁷⁷

In another vein, naming was the act of resisting a dominant culture that ascribed value and meaning in ways meant to reinforce racial hierarchy. CFUN’s *Mumininas* conveyed such beliefs about the hegemonic and resistive aspects of language, education, and positive modeling through the gendered discourse in their treatise on nationalist womanhood.⁷⁸ Indicating the same emphasis on the basic right to culturally-relevant, self-determined education as Malcolm X, with his belief that education was a “passport to the future,” the women said that the mother was the child’s first teacher and, likewise, teaching was a form of mothering.⁷⁹ The women wrote, teachers “must be conscious of the images and words they present . . . because words are strong images.” Their discourse about the importance of positive modeling was much like Malcolm’s.

⁷⁵ Molefi Kete Asante, *The Book of African Names*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1991), 8-9.

⁷⁶ Malcolm X, interview by Jim Hurlbut, Floyd Kalber, Len O'Connor, and Charles McCuen, *City Desk*, WMAQ, March 17, 1963.

⁷⁷ Asante, *The Book of African Names*, 8-9.

⁷⁸ Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 6.

⁷⁹ Malcolm X’s emphasis on the importance of education was also institutionalized in the African-centered school movement, in which the East’s Uhuru Sasa school’s administration and teachers played a major role. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 86. Bright, conversation.

For instance, he declared, “We must set a good example for our children and must teach them to always be ready to accept the responsibilities that are necessary for building good communities and nations.”⁸⁰ Further, the *Mumininas* borrowed Malcolm’s ideas and rhetoric in their statements about the necessity of nationalist women using every possible method for reaching nation-building goals by contending that she needed to assume the tasks of educating children, upholding nationalist values, and loving the people “by any means necessary.”⁸¹

If women directly employed Malcom X’s ideas in their own philosophies, and their movement work showed he was respected as a living example of Black Nationalism, his death took on a sacred meaning. Amiri Baraka recounted Malcolm’s untimely death as a watershed moment, and Baraka’s philosophies would reach members of the organizations he led. Amiri Baraka’s story intimated that his personal transformation would also impact Amina’s life. Amiri explained that, shortly after Malcolm’s assassination, when he was still LeRoi Jones (changed from Everett Leroy Jones), he left a successful career as a beat poet and playwright to become a founding father of the activist-oriented Black Arts Movement. His first wife Hettie was a middle-class, Jewish, white American living in downtown New York City. He left her to join the Black Freedom Struggle uptown in Harlem. He eventually moved back to his hometown to establish a movement hub, in 1966.⁸² As part of what Woodard called Jones’ “identity transformation,” he married Newark activist-artist Sylvia Robinson Wilson in an African-styled ceremony in 1967. It was during this key period that Hajj Heesham Jaaber, the orthodox Muslim priest who had

⁸⁰ Malcolm X, “Speech at the Founding Rally of the OAAU”; *Mumininas*, *Mwanamke Mwananchi*, 9.

⁸¹ *Mumininas*, *Mwanamke Mwananchi*, 9 and 15; Malcolm X, “Speech at the Founding Rally of the OAAU.”

⁸² In his autobiography, Amiri Baraka called his first wife “Nellie.” However, she wrote her own memoir and identified herself as Hettie Cohen Jones. Baraka, *Autobiography*, 193-201; Jones, *How I Became Hettie Jones*, 221-231.

presided over Malcolm's burial, gave Jones and Wilson the Muslim names Ameer and Amina Barakat.⁸³

Many of the women's narratives reflected the idea that Malcolm X's slaying was a transformational moment that catalyzed or reshaped their own activism. In Woodard's *A Nation within a Nation*, and Jones' autobiography, the authors showed how Malcolm X's life imprinted Amiri Baraka, but Amina appeared as an auxiliary character in the larger stories about Malcolm's influence on the couple and the broader group of the era's black revolutionaries.⁸⁴ This dissertation seeks to highlight the work of women like Amina, thus, it is important to center females' stories about this significant period in their own development. As such, Amina Baraka, like Azizi Powell, emphasized the significance of cultural practices such as naming in her recollections about the period. Amina stated, "Heshaam, the guy who buried Malcolm, was the one who renamed us. And it was Ameer [Ay-*meer*] and Amina [Ay-*mee-nah*] but he [Amiri] 'Swahili-ized' both of them . . . much later on."⁸⁵

Amina Baraka sometimes determined the relevance of events and charted time in her self-narrative by using Malcolm X as a marker. For example, she determined the Newark Jazz Arts Society and a significant phase of her time as an actress and dancer existed before Malcolm's death. Additionally, she recalled the period after Malcolm's assassination as a personal turning point in terms of her interactions with the NOI. Amina Baraka spoke positively about some of her early dealings with the organization, stating, "I had been introduced to the

⁸³ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 59; Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 378; Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

⁸⁴ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 59.

⁸⁵ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012. These statements revealed how Amina's name was pronounced prior to the Swahili-influenced [Ah-*mee-nah*]. Amiri Baraka only discussed the pronunciation of his first name in his autobiography. Baraka, *Autobiography*, 267.

Nation of Islam . . . by a black woman who was a friend of my first husband. [She] was a member of the Nation and I saw what went on in there and my daughters, my first two, went to Clara Muhammad School which was the Nation of Islam's school and that [served me] well. . . . To this day, I'm learning what they taught me." However, she continued her narrative by stating that she no longer wanted to remain affiliated with the Nation.⁸⁶

Malcolm X's assassination was a critical turning point for lesser-known Kawaida-influenced group members as well. Martha Bright of Brooklyn's East Organization reported Malcolm was killed when she was a junior in high school and the influential minister's death "forged" her activism.⁸⁷ Jaribu Hill, formerly of CFUN, also presented a story echoing the importance of Malcolm X's assassination as a catalyst for Black Power activism. Hill discussed her politicization in the context of Malcolm's life and death, her words elevating him as a martyr who catalyzed the movement. "Learning about Malcolm and how he was cut down a couple of years before," she said, put her on the road toward self-discovery and oriented her toward activism.⁸⁸ The political education and advocacy work to which Jaribu Hill was exposed through CFUN in the 1960s and 1970s remained a driving force for the rest of her life.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; Bayyinah Jeffries claimed the importance of the NOI school as a "catalyst" for shaping the consciousness of African Americans as a social and culturally denigrated people. Bayyinah S. Jeffries, *A Nation Can Rise No Higher Than Its Women* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 23; Ula Taylor has also indicated the appeal of NOI schools, calling them "the glue that held the Nation of Islam together" in many ways. Taylor, "Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam," 189.

⁸⁷ Bright, interview.

⁸⁸ Hill, interview; Helen A. Neville and Jennifer F. Hamer, "Revolutionary Black Women's Activism: Experience and Transformation," *The Black Scholar* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 9.

⁸⁹ Neville and Hamer, "Revolutionary Black Women's Activism," 9.

3.3 *Turbulent Times*

In addition to African-American nationalist influences, several broad elements of the 1960s and 1970s shaped Black Power era cultural-nationalist women. According to Jeffery Ogbar, the turbulent times impacted how Americans approached matters of race and identity. Ogbar claimed the Civil Rights Movement's successes bolstered African Americans, transforming the way they perceived themselves and expected others to see them.⁹⁰ For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 buttressed the struggle for racial equality and buoyed African Americans' hopes for change by "throwing open the doors of restaurants, hotels, and movie houses." Allowing the attorney general additional power to defend citizens against discrimination and segregation in voting, education, and use of public accommodations gave rise to or extended several federal programs including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Moreover, the law targeted discrimination in federally funded programs, which faced termination or withdrawal of governmental monetary support for noncompliance. In many parts of the country, the 1964 Civil Rights Act opened gateways to areas once closed to African Americans.⁹¹

Yet, resistance to the Civil Rights Act and its inherent weaknesses engendered Black Power sentiment. One of the law's limitations was its voting provision. The 1964 Civil Rights Act lacked the strength to stop states from exploiting loopholes and denying the franchise to many eligible African Americans in the South. For this reason, Congress followed with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, that primarily impacted former Confederate jurisdictions with

⁹⁰ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 1.

⁹¹ Alton Hornsby Jr., *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), 118.

histories of using certain discriminatory instruments to disfranchise many members of the voting-age population. Such precincts had to gain preclearance from the federal government before making changes to voting procedures. The Voting Rights Act oversaw certain major political successes, particularly in the South, where black voter registration and election to office markedly improved.⁹² However, the newly-delivered laws were not the strong medicine needed to cure the country's racism.

Crippled with fear, many African Americans in the South abstained from casting ballots despite the Voting Rights Act. As a result, activists began the Meredith March, during which the call to Black Power was raised. On June 6, 1966, James Meredith, who was the first black student to enroll in the University of Mississippi three years prior, decided to walk alone from Memphis to Jackson in an attempt to dispel anxieties and inspire black voter participation. Despite Meredith's efforts, his sojourn was violently ended when a white sniper blasted him with a shotgun. Meredith was not seriously injured, but civil rights activists decided to organize and continue his mission while he healed.⁹³ The day after the attack, *The New York Times* reported Martin Luther King, Jr. proclaimed the "dastardly shooting" indicated "the fact that . . . a cancerous social illness continues to plague our society."⁹⁴ Given their actions, many of the nation's young people who were turning toward Black Power ideology must have agreed. Charles Evers, Mississippi NAACP field secretary and brother of the slain freedom fighter, Medgar, captured the younger activists' more militant beliefs when he said, "There are many

⁹² Hornsby, *Black Power in Dixie*, 2.

⁹³ Lewis with D'Orso, 369. Carmichael with Ekwueme, 490.

⁹⁴ John Kifner, "Rights Leaders Plan to Take up Meredith's March in Mississippi," *New York Times*, June 7, 1966, 28.

Negroes who now feel the only time we are going to get a response and action is when we start shooting whites, and many of them are ready to do it now.”⁹⁵

Young, black Americans’ feverish sentiments must have been palpable to Evers, not least because he was living in the midst of the “Long Hot Summers.” The era, which lasted from 1964 through 1967, involved a series of urban rebellions breaking out in cities across the country during the scorching summer months. Some of the worst urban uprisings in U.S. history were among the scores of spontaneous events in the 1960s. From Harlem, Rochester, and Jersey City in 1964, to Atlanta, Cleveland, and Chicago in 1966, and Newark, Cincinnati, Detroit, Philadelphia in 1967, the 233 total rebellions over the four-year period involved 131 deaths, 5,454 injuries, and 29,254 arrests. These expressions of exasperation and anger witnessed occupants of urban areas hurling rocks and bottles at those considered outsiders or oppressors, expropriating goods from various stores and warehouses, or setting ablaze the vehicles and businesses of those perceived as offenders. The rebellions reached epidemic levels during the Black Power era, spilling beyond the “Long Hot Summers” and into spring 1968 when Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. The uprisings would not subside until 1971. Seven hundred and fifty-two urban rebellions broke out during the entire eight-year period, with more than 100 occurring in the aftermath of King’s assassination in 1968, the peak period of frustration and unrest during this era. That year, 289 total eruptions occurred, 66 people were killed, and over 5,000 injured.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Kifner, “Rights Leaders,” 28.

⁹⁶ John F. McDonald, *Urban America: Growth, Crisis, and Rebirth* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 49-150; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 94.

Jamala Rogers (CAP St. Louis) recalled the 1968 uprising in her hometown of Kansas City, Missouri as an important event in her own life. Remembering several factors influencing her activism, she sifted through memories of being an inquisitive youth who was “keenly aware of differences and injustices.” She grew up during the 1950s and early 1960s attending Jim Crow elementary and middle schools in a city that had been segregated since the earliest years of the century. She pointed out the 1968 rebellion in her town awakened her desire to get serious about helping America become a better place for all citizens. She viewed the uprising as an understandable response to the glacial pace of civil rights reform, white resistance, and the entrenched inequality of living conditions in her community. Similar forms of the neighborhood fragmentation and racial marginalization that Tamanika Howze witnessed in Pittsburgh wracked the Kansas City of Jamala Rogers’ youth. According to sociologist Kevin Fox Gotham, exclusion and injustice defined the city’s racial climate, with dissent against such conditions reaching unprecedented levels in the late 1960s.⁹⁷

“Basically the country was aflame because of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King,” Rogers said. She remembered an “eruption of people throwing bricks in windows and rocks at buses. . . . In a matter of forty hours, it was like a full rebellion.” The uprising after King’s assassination happened during her senior year in high school. Rogers recalled the pain of losing personal items such as a friend’s wedding photos as well as community mainstays like the soda fountain where she was employed. “Everything was aflame” in her neighborhood, she lamented. As a result, she said, local authorities called in the National Guard, set curfews, and tragically, several people died.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Rogers, interview; Kevin Fox Gotham, *Race, Real Estate and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 33, 93, & 121-123.

⁹⁸ Rogers, interview; “Riot Continues in Kansas City,” *The Afro-American* (Baltimore), April 13, 1968, 22.

Remembering her adventurous spirit as a significant characteristic of her budding activism, Rogers recalled flouting her mother's orders to stay indoors. Contrasting herself with her siblings she said, "My sisters basically obeyed, but I just had to go and see what it looked like." When she approached the epicenter of the conflict, she stated, "I could just feel the tear gas and my eyes started burning and tearing up and then I saw that Crown Drugstore was gone. It looked like . . . a parking lot." Witnessing the events shaped Rogers' belief that black and white lives were differently valued, a fact that Civil Rights Movement triumphs had not changed. She declared, "The really powerful image that I saw was a tank coming down the middle of Indiana Avenue and I'm like, whoa! These folks are coming to kill us and have no problems with doing that." Rogers recalled the shock of seeing the hulking tank rumbling down the streets of her city and expressed, "That was the significant turning point that I needed to be a bit more serious about what I was thinking about." She contemplated, "This was not the way people should be living."⁹⁹

⁹⁹ In many instances, participants in the uprisings believed their actions to be retribution for long-term abuses and inequalities which had not been resolved, such as rude service and overpricing in retail stores, aggressive policing by mostly-white forces, lack of job opportunities, inadequate public transportation, limited and underfunded educational opportunities, community displacement in the process of "urban renewal," crowded and inferior housing and, in the case of 1968 Kansas City, the fact that civil rights leadership with even the most peaceful and moderate claims were resisted, delayed and outmaneuvered. Conversely, authorities frequently dealt with participants of the uprisings as if their motivations were solely criminal. Increasingly conservative responses from government authorities focused upon "law and order" solutions operating on stereotypes of the black masses as inherently or disproportionately violent and criminal. Resulting responses employed overwhelming force to deal with the discontented African Americans producing deaths, injuries, and arrests (mainly impacting black males). As seen with the 1970 Kent State incident, when military forces such as the National Guard were deployed to quell civil disturbances, the accelerated use of force could cause deadly results. Witnesses like Jamala Rogers viewed uprising participants as people with legitimate but unresolved grievances who were repressed with overwhelming force. The issues of competing views of urban uprisings are dealt with in Hayden, *Rebellion in Newark*, 3-8 and 63-72 and Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno and Jerome Bongiorno, *Revolution '67*, DVD, San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel, 2007; Rogers, interview; State of California Military Department: Military Support of Law Enforcement During Civil Disturbances, August 1965, California State Military Museum, accessed February 24, 2014, <http://www.militarymuseum.org/watts.pdf>; Gotham, *Race, Real Estate and Uneven Development*.; Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 14; Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder: *Report for Action*, State of New Jersey, accessed February 26, 2014, http://slic.njstatelib.org/slic_files/digidocs/c5815/c58151968.pdf, 148.

In the months after the uprising, Rogers graduated from Central High School and went on to attend Tarkio College with an affirmative action-type financial aid package, which she believed university administrators created in response to black rebellion. She recalled she was an honors student but expressed that she did not remember receiving any college funding offers prior to the uprising. However, she observed, “These monies started coming into the ghetto for kids. . . . All of a sudden now money was available. So, I got a full academic scholarship to a small Presbyterian college in the upper part of Missouri.” At Tarkio, Rogers reported that she was one of few African-American students. As a result, she joined the black students’ association as a freshman for camaraderie and in an effort to agitate for change.¹⁰⁰ In the organization, she participated in protests aimed at instituting black history classes and observances as well as worked at getting the college to hire African-American faculty and administrators.

During school breaks Rogers recalled traveling to Chicago where she took part in programs like Communiversity, which was an institution reflecting one of the overarching aims the era: serving the community. Much like SNCC’s freedom schools, Communiversity connected students with educated volunteer teachers. Topics ranged from African-American history to black psychology. While civil rights freedom schools specifically catered to the academic, recreational, and citizenship needs of Southerners ranging from preschoolers to the elderly, Communiversity focused on Chicago’s Southside residents unable to otherwise gain access to college-level Black Studies courses. Communiversity’s developers offered classes rarely included in mainstream curricula. These weekend colloquia were free and open to the public. The overall goal was expanding educational access and conscientizing students to become agents

¹⁰⁰ Jamala Rogers reported the Black Student Alliance at Tarkio later added the words “for Revolutionary Action” (BSARA) to their name to underscore their focus on political action above and beyond social events. Rogers, interview.

of social and political change. According to historian Martha Biondi's account, cultural nationalists were among the most numerous and enduring Community instructors. It is no surprise, therefore, that Jamala Rogers characterized such Black Power-era experiences as key to orienting her worldview toward Pan-African cultural nationalism. She remembered the 1968 rebellion as "an event that was the culmination of other insights" leading to her cultural-nationalist activism.¹⁰¹

Jamala Rogers was much like other young African Americans in that she was oriented toward cultural nationalism in the aftermath of 1960s and 70s uprisings. Two of the most intense urban rebellions took place in Watts in 1965 and Newark in 1967. Historians have documented the uprisings' significance in stimulating Maulana Karenga's and Amiri Baraka's entry into political activism and their eventual development of the Us Organization and Committee for a Unified Newark; yet few have analyzed the effect on the female cultural-nationalists who filled their ranks. This chapter emphasizes the impact of the rebellions on women as a catalyst and a shaping influence.

Such upheavals as the disturbances of the Long Hot Summers were watershed events. Scholars have pointed out that Watts can be considered the most brutal civil disturbance since

¹⁰¹ African-American Studies expert, Ibram Rogers, asserted "grassroots altruism" was a key aim of the Black Campus Movement. Ibram Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5; Freedom schools consisted of activists, artists, undergraduate and graduate-level students, and educators instructing African-Americans in subjects "'separate but equal' schools would never teach." These included black culture and history as well as topics exploring economic inequality. The schools educated black students when local authorities closed systems in reaction to federal integration orders, in circumstances where black students attended the inherently substandard Jim Crow schools, and boosted political literacy for voter registration. Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 111; Lisa Brock, "Selected Projects in Labor Education: The Chicago Community University," *Radical History Review* 72 (1998): 78, accessed February 25, 2014, Arts & Humanities Citation Index, EBSCOhost; Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season of 1964 that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 11; Kathy Emery, Sylvia Braselmann, and Linda Gold, eds., "Freedom School Curriculum: Mississippi Freedom Summer, 1964," (2004), accessed May 18, 2014, <http://www.educationanddemocracy.org/FSCpdf/CurrTextOnlyAll.pdf>; Rogers, interview.

the 1863 New York City draft riots.¹⁰² At least 30 people were killed in the Watts rebellion, with approximately 1,000 injured and 4,000 arrested. All except five among the dead were African Americans.¹⁰³ The rebellion in Newark claimed 26 lives. There were 725 injured and an estimated 1,600 arrested. As in California, most of those affected in New Jersey were African-American males, a general reality about the uprisings which must have confirmed many of the women's belief in the primacy of race work and the dire consequences of racism, particularly for black boys and men.¹⁰⁴ The collective outcomes of the uprisings highlighted the fact that Civil Rights Movement victories had not dismantled structural inequity, particularly in the nation's urban areas and especially at the intersection of race, class, and gender. Thus, some activist-minded young women saw there was still much work to do in the aftermath of the rebellions, which stimulated many to join the Black Freedom Struggle at such a critical time.

Focused on the issues of race and class, many government officials would come to realize desegregating public spaces and integrating jobs had not been enough to eliminate racism and alleviate poverty. Several government commissions produced reports groping for answers to the nation's intertwined racial and economic problems. President Lyndon Johnson issued Executive Order (EO) 11365 on July 29, 1967; which ordered the creation of the Kerner Commission, and argued that the core problems causing the civil disorders were the marginalizing and isolating practices of "white racism."¹⁰⁵ The commission's report memorably stated, "Our nation is

¹⁰² Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 15.

¹⁰³ Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 15; The State of California Military Department declared the Watts uprising the worst in history. *Military Support of Law Enforcement during Civil Disturbances*, 45; Horne, *Fire This Time*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Report for Action*, 124 & 148.

¹⁰⁵ The full name of the Kerner Commission was the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. Joyce Ladner, "40 Years Later: Revisiting the Kerner Commission," *The Washington Times*, February 29, 2008, A17;

moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.” Moreover, the *Newark Report for Action* flatly stated, “There is evidence of prejudice against Negroes during the riot on the part of various police and National Guard elements. This resulted in the use of excessive and unjustified force and other abuses against Negro citizens.” Although, while such reports sparked a national dialogue on race and poverty, President Johnson’s war on poverty and accompanying federal antipoverty programs were unsuccessful in bridging the deep economic chasm between black and white people. Despite activists’ ideals and the actions of certain government officials, the part of the electorate eventually dubbed “the silent majority” came to increasingly believe funds for federal programs were pulled directly from their pockets to prop up a section of the American populace who they stereotyped as lazy and lawless.¹⁰⁶

The spirit of the times—a rising tide of expectations in the wake of civil rights gains, evaporating hopes as the movement’s limitations were exposed, a flood of civil unrest, and the resulting conservative backlash—would prove impactful in shaping certain young African Americans’ outlook as well as the character of the cultural-nationalist movement. This was the environment that sparked Pan-African cultural-nationalist women’s activism. Their development was not anomalous but one kind on a continuum of other protest forms from civil rights activism to earlier versions of modern black nationalism—not identical to others, yet not alien. While discontent was on the rise among many African Americans at the time, various groups in the U.S. and across the globe also grew more disaffected as each event unfolded. For example, the Vietnam War and resulting protests further disturbed the waters of turbulent times.

¹⁰⁶ Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 198-199.

4 “I COULD NOT SIT BACK . . . AND OPT OUT”: PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL-NATIONALIST WOMEN’S BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE NARRATIVES AND WAYS OF BEING IN THE WORLD¹

The women involved in this study were born during the decades between the end of World War II and the Cuban Revolution (1944-1959). In many ways, their world was in the process of rapid transformation. In addition to the exigencies of the political climate in the U.S., global events also molded their Pan-African cultural-nationalism. Black Power-era cultural nationalists grew up in an environment of crumbling colonial empires, their world a sphere divided into two opposing Cold War positions, East and West. A rising Third-World south challenged the legitimacy of this bipolar construct. Martha Bright, an East member, discussed her motivation for joining the struggle. Born in 1948, she grew up a Jehovah’s Witness, a religious group eschewing political involvement. As a teen in the midst of the politically-charged 1960s, Bright recalled seeing global events on television and desiring to get involved to help make a change. She recalled that, in order to engage what she saw as a global freedom struggle, she left the Jehovah’s Witnesses. She exclaimed, “I left because I wanted to be involved. I could not sit back and watch all that was going on in the world and opt out.”²

As Joseph pointed out and the women’s narratives confirmed, events from the growth of the NOI in the 1950s and 1960s to the 1966 March Against Fear influenced these budding activists, students, and Black Power advocates. Moreover, Woodard asserted that, at the time, a new generation of black leaders who were reared in ghettos came to associate the destiny of the Black Freedom Struggle with the outcomes of nationalist movements in Fidel Castro’s Cuba,

¹ Bright, interview, part 1 of 2.

² Bright, interview, part 1 of 2.

Mao Zedong's China, and Patrice Lumumba's Congo. Thus, both national events and global affairs molded this group.³ The East's Mtamanika Beatty confirmed this idea with her view that the "cultural consciousness in the country, actually in the world" raised her own level of awareness.⁴ Like their male counterparts, females who would become cultural nationalists in the 1960s and 1970s watched global events unfold as they came of age. Martha Bright's declaration about global events as catalysts for her activism captured many of the women's sentiments.⁵

Some Pan-African cultural-nationalist activists characterized the Vietnam conflict as a war meant to violently extend American dominion over the world's people of color.⁶ For example Amina Thomas, who joined the Us Organization during the sixties, explained that as students in California, she and her peers were activists advocating for several causes among many other protestors and issues, from the war to the farm workers' movement led by Cesar Chavez.⁷ Thomas reflected on her own activism and the ideas she and many other young people expressed about the war at the time. She said her peers were involved in protests against the Vietnam conflict, which they viewed as an illegal war.⁸

According to the literature, the Vietnam conflict was one defining element of cultural-nationalists' anticolonialist and internationalist outlook as well as the Long Black Freedom Struggle's leftward shift during the Black Power era. Woodard explained that, like the Southeast

³ Joseph ed., *The Black Power Movement*, 14; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 43.

⁴ Beatty, interview.

⁵ Bright, interview, part 1 of 2.

⁶ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 215.

⁷ Thomas, interview.

⁸ Thomas, interview.

Asian nationalists who established the Viet Minh alliance to overthrow French domination, many Black Power era cultural nationalists also viewed themselves as peoples of an oppressed nation and thus identified with global nationalists' efforts to throw off the yoke of Western domination. Some Pan-African cultural nationalists perceived themselves as fellow travelers with the Vietnamese in the international struggle against imperialism. This, Woodard explained, was exemplified in such instances as the 1968 Philadelphia Black Power Conference, which many cultural nationalists attended. There, attendees unanimously voted to pass a resolution calling for the United States' "'unilateral and immediate withdrawal' from the Vietnam War." Another motion called for resistance against the U.S. government's use of draft-age, black youth "as cannon fodder for the racist imperialistic war." Pan-African cultural nationalists, among other constituent groups, raised similar concerns over the virulence of Western imperialism at the 1972 Gary political convention.⁹

Specifically focusing on Kawaida-influenced cultural nationalism, Scot Brown explained the Vietnam conflict was one contributing factor of the Us Organization's anticolonialism. Members used the Seven Principles as a paradigm for framing the idea that Vietnamese opposition to foreign domination fell in line with African Americans' and Southeast Asians' similar struggles for self-determination as oppressed groups.¹⁰ Us Organization activists also participated in alliances with Vietnam War protestors. Some Kawaida advocates were even conscientious objectors. Additionally, Marines formed an Us Organization affiliate while in Vietnam. Brown asserted that, along with other radical organizations like the Black Panthers, such groups influenced and supported African-Americans' race-based resistance and rebellion in

⁹ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 38 & 107-108.

the military. Kawaida-influenced activism, wrote Brown, forced some to question the fundamental morality of the war.¹¹

Further reflecting the influence of the turbulent times on cultural-nationalist ideologies, Anti-Vietnam War expression peppered *Black News*, which female East members staffed, sold, and read.¹² One 1970 cover depicted a larger-than-life President Richard Nixon alongside Vice President Spiro Agnew. The two officials indiscriminately plucked antiwar and Black-Power protesters from a single mass of demonstrators and devoured them.¹³ The advertisement for an East organization film festival underscored the fact that many cultural nationalists' sense of internationalism and anti-imperialism was intertwined with anti-Vietnam War sentiment and the belief that the world's people of color and African Americans shared common forms of oppression. The event featured: pieces documenting the African-American struggle, such as public television shows, *The Negro and the American Promise* and *The Black Soldier*; an exploration of the black community's response to King's assassination in *Listen Whitey*; the documentary, *No Vietnamese Ever Called Me a Nigger*; news footage from "Communist China and Vietnam;" *The Battle of Algiers*, which depicted Algerians' war against the French colonial government; and *Hasta la Victoria Siempre*, a film about the notable Argentinian doctor and Cuban Revolution leader Che Guevara.¹⁴

¹¹ Brown, 84-88.

¹² Aminisha Black and Maitefa Angaza, "East Time-Line," in *The EAST Sisterhood: An Institution Beyond Walls*, report to The Council of Independent Black Institutions, 14 November 2002, 1, Martha Bright papers, private collection; Fisher, *Black Literate Lives*, 60; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 68-69; Bright, interview, part 1 of 2; Sanders, interview; Peterson, interview.

¹³ Cover, *Black News*, May 12, 1970.

¹⁴ Summer film festival advertisement, *Black News*, July 6, 1970, 8.

Driving home the idea that the overarching influence of such hallmark events as the Vietnam War shaped Black Power differently than other phases of the Long Black Freedom Struggle, Ahidiana founding member Kalamu ya Salaam remembered veterans returning stateside to influence the tone and tenor of the movement. Emphasizing the differences between key phases of the Black Freedom Struggle, he said, “That was the distinction between the Black Liberation Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement was [younger] college students for the most part . . . and the nonviolence worked for that. That wasn’t the Black Liberation Struggle.”¹⁵ The conflict, resulting antiwar protests, and returning veterans shaped the essence of many Pan-African cultural nationalists’ ideas and activism during the era. Thus, Vietnam was a world event influencing the movement that cultural-nationalist women would enter. The war made the era in which they existed and their struggle unique.

In October 1949, the People’s Republic of China came into existence as Mao Zedung’s victorious troops pushed the opposing Kuomintang off the mainland and onto the island of Taiwan. John O. Killens, a notable Black Arts Movement writer, summed up the event’s significance to the Black Freedom struggle, remarking, “If [the Chinese] could come, from the very lower depths, come so far so fast then why not African-Americans? Why not us?”¹⁶ Additionally, black radicals viewed the Chinese as people of color who would lead the socialist revolution for all the dark-skinned and Third World peoples around the globe.¹⁷ Many African-

¹⁵ Kalamu ya Salaam, interview by author, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 6, 2013.

¹⁶ John Oliver Killens, “Black Man in the New China,” *Black World*, November 1975, 41.

¹⁷ Robin D. G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, “Black like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” *Souls* 1 (1999): 8; Malcolm X, in particular, outlined the terms “dark world,” “dark man,” and “dark-skinned people” to articulate the idea of unity among nonwhites and illustrate the concept that, within context of global imperialism, whites were considered a “common enemy.” Malcolm X, “Message to the Grass Roots” in *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Merit, 1965), 6; The “Third-World” framing is from Congress of African People’s “The Woman Question: Black Women and Struggle,” 9.

American radicals discovered China through Caribbean and African liberation struggles. As historians have recounted, some literally pressed the case for revolution in the name of Mao alongside the more standard Marx and Lenin. Many radical African Americans of the era framed China as a place where true freedom was accessible in the same vein as they regarded Cuba, Ghana, and Paris. This viewpoint was, no doubt, solidified by the fact that China extended goodwill and asylum to exiled nationalists Robert and Mabel Williams. Additionally, Mao's emphasis on cultural struggle was especially appealing and applicable to certain approaches to achieving Black Power. The Chinese Revolution, therefore, demonstrated for many that cultural and revolutionary nationalism were inseparable.¹⁸

Communist China's influence on cultural-nationalist women's outlook and activism was especially evident in terms of women's gender roles. Kelley and Esch wrote that theories from the Chinese Revolution became particularly attractive to female activists because they addressed "the woman question" during this period of increasingly masculinist liberation expressions. "In some very vital militant factions of the Black cultural revolution, women were required to metaphorically 'sit on the back of the bus,'" wrote Killens. However, he added, "the Chinese say, 'Women hold up one-half of the world.'"¹⁹

Some might claim that embracing a Maoist stance in terms of women's appropriate places in society represented either an ideological shift away from cultural nationalism, while

¹⁸ Robin D. G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," *Souls* 1 (1999): 8; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 43; Stressing the significance of communist China's support of exiled freedom fighters such as Williams, accounts of the Independent Black Schools tour (1977) stated the Black Freedom Struggle leader and self-defense advocate was on hand in China to meet and hold discussions with the traveling group of independent African-American school teachers and administrators. Ron Karenga, "Black Alternative Educators Tour the People's Republic of China," *The Black Scholar* 19 (September 1977): 55; Basir Mchawi, "Black Educators Back from 'Eye-Opener' Tour of China," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 27, 1977, B2; Simon Anekwe, "Williams Regains Chinese Support, Loses Appeal," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 20, 1975, A12.

¹⁹ Killens, "Black Man in the New China," 41-42.

others might view it as an improvement of Pan-African cultural-nationalist values. Whatever the case, Maoist reforms in relation to females' status in communist China affected women's actual and perceived roles in the Black Freedom Struggle. An example of the use of Maoism to augment black cultural nationalism can be found in Ahidiana's movement work. An Africanized version of the Chinese saying, "Our women keep our skies from falling" was emblazoned on the cover of an essay series. A graphic of feminine figures clothed in wrap skirts called *lapas* framed the words. The ladies seemingly supported the African diaspora section of the Atlantic world, and stood beneath a figure resembling an Egyptian goddess.²⁰

Additional examples also demonstrated communist China's influence. In her 2003 dissertation, Tayari kwa Salaam of Ahidiana wrote about organizing a party of African-American independent school educators and administrators traveling to China for eighteen days.²¹ Articles published about the 1970s expedition included Maulana Karenga and Kalamu ya Salaam among tour group members but do not mention any female travelers. However, the Salaams' daughter, Kiini, emphasized her mother, Tayari's, China tour as important in her own recollections. As a girl growing up in Ahidiana, Kiini recalled being exposed to internationalist ideas and networks, which were foundational to her thinking about gender and upon which she built as a world-traveling, adult writer.

²⁰ Kalamu ya Salaam, *Our Women Keep Our Skies from Falling: Six Essays in Support of the Struggle to Smash Sexism/Develop Women* (New Orleans: Nkombo, 1980), 5; A West-African *lapa* skirt is made of brightly patterned cloth wrapped and tied around the waist. This author asserts the *lapa* was used as a symbol of African womanhood recognizable to broader cultural-nationalist circles. The Egyptian goddess appeared to be Nut, with hands and feet on the earth and body forming the sky. "How to Tie a Lapa," *Black News*, 3, no. 5, December 1975, 31.

²¹ Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-Journeying," 193; Tayari kwa Salaam is also cited as the organizer of a 1977 tour of the People's Republic of China for twenty African-American educators in the back matter of Tayari kwa Salaam, *Working Together We Can Make a Change*.

Kiini Salaam pointed out that teachers at the Ahidiana Work/Study Center often used Chinese pictures and literature to reinforce the significance of gender neutrality in the freedom struggle. She stated, “We had all these drawings from books from communist China and . . . the women and the men used one uniform.” Although it must be stressed that Ahidiana did not espouse communism, Kiini opined the Work/Study Center’s instructors selectively used images from communist China to bolster the idea that the roles of great leader, freedom fighter, and nationalist were “nongendered” in her words.²² It should also be noted that Ahidiana’s mid- to late-1970s practice of teaching gender neutrality by way of Maoist uniforms, specifically to a new generation, reflected changing ideologies over time and was not necessarily the stance of cultural nationalists in all Kawaida-influenced organizations. On the contrary, the practice reflected Ahidiana members’ specific brand of egalitarianism and what I am labeling their syncretic use of Kawaida doctrine—that is, their incorporation of various practices and ideologies, such as Maoism and Pan-Africanism, as their organizations evolved. Early Kawaida doctrine and practices emanating from the Us Organization rested on the idea of inherent differences between the sexes via “complementarity.” This belief played out in gendered prescriptions for dress, grooming, and behavior.²³

²² Kalamu ya Salaam, interview; Kiini Ibura Salaam, interview; Use of clothing in communist China to promote national unity and equality between males and females has been explored in the literature. According to historian, Xurong Kong, the military-styled uniforms came into vogue during the Chinese revolution and lasted until the end of the 1980s. This assertion further underscores the idea that prevailing trends from other parts of the globe catalyzed and shaped cultural nationalist’s activism, not only in terms of their thinking about race and class but also gender. Xurong Kong, “Military Uniform as a Fashion during the Cultural Revolution,” *Intercultural Communication Studies* XVII (2008): 299-302; For a graphic of Ahidiana Work/Study Center’s gender-neutral children’s uniform, see the school logo, as depicted on, “The Work/Study Center: Ninth Annual Graduation Celebration,” program May 12, 1985, Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection.

²³ Kalamu ya Salaam, interview; For a source highlighting the early Kawaida position that women should be fundamentally “feminine,” which inherently required “submissiveness,” see Halisi and Mtume, *The Quotable Karenga*, 20; For a description of requirements for women’s dress in the Us Organization from Amiri Baraka’s perspective, see Baraka, *Autobiography*, 386;

A socialist since the 1970s, Amina Baraka also reflected on how Maoism influenced her activism. She stated the Chinese philosophy especially molded her thinking about “the larger woman question.” She surmised many Pan-African cultural nationalists were initially concerned with fighting racism and, having few other examples of freedom fighters, drew upon religiously-based patriarchal models from the Nation of Islam as well as Civil Rights Movement Christian models where gender was concerned. Baraka speculated early Kwaiaida-based organizational male chauvinism might have been unintentional. She went on to explain that, as more female CAP members studied Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, they began to challenge their second-class status as cultural-nationalist women.²⁴ This reality was reflected in the BWUF “Woman Question” essay. Indicating CAP’s earlier beliefs about the Women’s Rights Movement, the essay stated, “When the question of women’s liberation came up, this was rejected immediately as middle class and white. We never did see our liberation coming separate from that of black people (and we still hold this view).” Further, the essay contained the following statement, “We did not have Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought (M-L-M) to guide our analysis so we could not see women’s oppression as a part of the development of Capitalism.”²⁵ Thus, the authors highlighted the importance of internationalist thought in the evolution of CAP’s activist stance in terms of addressing women’s issues.

In addition to mentioning Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism in her oral narrative, Amina Baraka also indicated that studying African liberation struggles spurred some women to push

²⁴ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; Similar views about factors shaping Black-nationalist gender roles can be found in “The Woman Question,” which stressed the Nation of Islam’s influence on Black Power-era cultural nationalism, in the oral narrative of The East’s Mtamanika Beatty, where she said the organization’s polygynous practices came from “close association [with] the Muslim philosophy of more than one wife,” and in “Africa on My Mind” where E. Frances White claimed Black-nationalist sex roles mirrored those of conservative, mainstream America. Congress of African People’s “The Woman Question: Black Women and Struggle,” 13; White, “Africa on My Mind,” 76; Beatty, interview.

²⁵ “The Woman Question,” 14.

against restrictive cultural-nationalist gender roles. Discussing Black Power-era nationalist women's changing views of their roles in independence struggles, she stated, "A lot of it had to do to with reading about women in the African liberation organizations and their roles and so-forth. They were out on the battle field and doing all sorts of things. They were even heads of units and so-forth. The more we got involved with studying the role of the women in Africa, the more conscious we became that we were not in the right place and that we could do more [in the movement]." ²⁶

Black-nationalist women sought more influence in the movement by embracing a modern perspective on gender roles as projected by African women. Amina Baraka explained that some of the women believed adopting gender roles more typically associated with power and leadership in certain African liberation struggles would convince cultural-nationalist men of female equality. Amina Baraka went on to explain that since earlier cultural-nationalist gender roles were often discussed in the context of "African culture," women who desired more equality believed introducing a broader range of possibilities would persuade men to change their minds. "We figured," she said, "when they read about Josina Machel, Samora Machel's wife, they'll change their minds." ²⁷ She explained that the efforts of Pan-African cultural-nationalist women to secure more egalitarian gender roles by providing examples of revolutionary African females

²⁶ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

²⁷ Samora Machel was commander of Mozambique Liberation Front's (FRELIMO) guerilla army, which resisted the better resourced and outfitted Portuguese from 1964-1974. He became the first president of the People's Republic of Mozambique, serving from 1975 until he was killed in a 1986 plane crash. Josina, his first wife, was an armed FRELIMO soldier, community organizer, and head of such agencies as the Department of International Relations women's section. Her staunch advocacy for full female inclusion in all areas of the liberation struggle represented a departure from standard beliefs about women's roles in "'traditional' African" society. In many ways her stance reflected FRELIMO's overall commitment to equality, which was part of the independence movement's efforts to attack both "the racist and sexist practices of Portuguese colonial authorities" and African practices that "curtailed the power and status of women." Michael G. Panzer, "The Pedagogy of Revolution: Youth, Generational Conflict, and Education in the Development of Mozambican Nationalism and the State, 1962-1970," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35 (December 2009): 810.

from Machel to Winnie Mandela produced mixed results.²⁸ She opined that some men changed their beliefs about male-dominance while others did not.²⁹

As reflected in Azizi Powell's previous recollections, cultural-nationalist women cited African independence movements as influential in their choices to join the Black Freedom Struggle. Historian James Meriwether explained that a vision of Africa burning with revolutionary fires spread through black America by the mid-1950s. Meriweather cited key battles for self-determination on the continent, from South Africans' nonviolent defiance campaign to the Mau Mau's armed struggle against British colonialism. Moreover, he noted that news of these important struggles came to African Americans mainly via the independent press. From Libya in the 1950s to Guinea and Tanzania in the 1960s, over thirty African nations gained independence in the post-World War II years. These world events made an impression on the women who would become Pan-African cultural nationalists in the Black Power Movement.

Ghana's progress toward national sovereignty, which began in 1957, was particularly notable. Kwame Nkrumah, a key independence movement leader, emerged as the model of modern Africa and a bulwark against stereotypes about the continent's black inhabitants as

²⁸ The first Black medical social worker in South Africa Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was the political colleague and second wife of South Africa's Nelson Mandela, leader of the African National Congress. The couple married in 1958 and remained separated due to Nelson Mandela's frequent detainments and ultimate 26-year prison term for his connection with the civil disobedience campaigns of the same decade. Forced into single motherhood, Madikizela-Mandela carried on the antiapartheid struggle as one of the movement's best known spokespersons and leaders, facing bannings, imprisonment, and risking her life for equality in her country. Notably, in the Black Consciousness era (1968-1977), Winnie Mandela Founded the Black Women's Federation during a period when ordinary women asserted themselves in "vocal" and "self-confident" political roles. Winnie Mandela, *Part of My Soul Went with Him* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 60; Daniel R. Magaziner, "Pieces of a (Wo)man: Feminism, Gender and Adulthood in Black Consciousness, 1968-1977," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37 (March 2011): 45 & 49.

²⁹ Sababa Akili was one of the impacted men. Akili was in the Cleveland cultural-nationalist group Afro Set. He discussed how women, including Amina Baraka posed forceful challenges to chauvinistic perspectives on women's gender roles and polygamous practices. He described having a personal epiphany after several interactions with them, ultimately deeming beliefs and practices reinforcing female inequality as "politically incorrect." Sababa Akili, interview by author, Atlanta, Georgia, June 22, 2013.

unsophisticated and backwards.³⁰ Both Nkrumah and the larger Ghanaian independence struggle exemplified new images of black autonomy, confidence, and competence and many African Americans identified with modern Africa in new ways. Moreover, as Nkrumah envisioned, the struggle for sovereignty resonated beyond Ghana's borders, not only washing over the African continent, but also sweeping up African descended people all over the world in a tide of "freedom dreams."³¹

Like Nkrumah and the Ghanaian independence movement, Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution also arose as icons of the "darker world's" struggle against racial and economic domination. According to Kelley and Esch, Castro's stay at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem during his 1960 United Nations visit gave African Americans a glimpse of a staunch socialist who supported solidarity among the world's people of color. The news of Castro's visit to the country's best known black neighborhood was reported across the nation at a time when budding activists who eventually chose cultural nationalism were developing their consciousness of the world around them.³² Castro's appeal was reflected in such references as the one listed in *Black News*, which reported that 63 women and men who visited South America on a 1973 *Uhuru Sasa* School-sponsored trip were "honored" by a visit from Fidel Castro. The article's author described Castro as the "distinguished" prime minister of Cuba.³³ Specifically in terms of

³⁰ Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 150.

³¹ Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 3; The term "freedom dreams" comes from Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press), 2002.

³² Both positive and negative coverage of Castro's Harlem residency appeared in the Black and the mainstream press. The event was featured on several newspapers' front pages including the *Atlanta Daily World* and the *Chicago Defender*. The New York Times specifically addressed the idea of Castro's support of racial equality in the article, "Castro is Seeking Negroes' Support: Hotel Shift Seen as Part of Drive Stressing Racial Equality"; "Nikita, Castro Meet in Harlem," *Atlanta Daily World*, September 21, 1960, 1; "Harlem Hotel Doesn't Want Fidel Castro Back: Manager Says Cuban Leader Not Welcome," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 29, 1960, A1.

³³ Camara Thembi Badi, "Guyana '73: The Guyana Experience," *Black News* 2, no. 10 (October 22, 1973), 3.

nationalists concerned with women's equality, Amina Baraka discussed inspirational female leaders of the Cuban revolution in her oral narrative.³⁴

Like Cuba, other countries in Africa and the diaspora gained independence in 1960. The Congo's struggle for sovereignty particularly factored into the women's recollections. Woodard has written about sixties nationalists' "singular fascination" with the ambitious Patrice Lumumba, prime minister of the emergent Republic of the Congo. Lumumba's influence owed to the fact that he rose from humble beginnings to lead the Congolese anticolonial struggle for access to education, dignity and control of the country's vast mineral resources in the face of Belgian dominance. Lumumba's contested tenure was cut short by mercenaries connected to a secessionist faction and backed by Westerners including the U.S. government. Many budding African-American activists came to view the fallen leader as a martyr. Their convictions sparked 1961 protests at the United Nations against the deplorable details of his slaying. The East's Martha Bright remembered Lumumba's assassination as a defining moment, which heightened her desire to join the Freedom Struggle. She stated the Pan-Africanist leader was assassinated when she was in junior high school. She highlighted the personal meaning of Lumumba's death by explaining, "All of these things forged me."³⁵

Cuba and the Congo were not the only identifications Black Power activists had with international freedom struggles. South Africa's post-World War II antiapartheid struggles piqued some Pan-African cultural-nationalist women's interest in activism and later influenced their movement work. For instance, Nilima Mwendo remembered participating in Ahidiana's

³⁴ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; For more information on women in the Cuban Revolution, see Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santo, and Yolanda Ferrer, *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution within the Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder, 2012).

³⁵ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 54-56; Bright, interview, part 1 of 2.

antiapartheid protests. She said, “South Africa was under . . . legal apartheid and we were against the Krugerrand because so many of our African brothers and sisters were dying in those mines getting that piece of gold that was so expensive.” Mwendo went further, explaining, “We found out what banks were selling the Krugerrand and we protested on a . . . regular basis Even brought our school kids, our Ahidiana kids, in their uniform, green pants, and we’re protesting. We did it until they stopped.”³⁶

Mwendo and her fellow Ahidiana members were not alone as cultural-nationalist women engaging the South African antiapartheid battle and the fight to ban the Krugerrand. In a 1985 news article, Azizi Powell incisively addressed what she saw as black political myopia, materialism, apathy, and self-involvement as related to global struggles for equality. She stated, “Some African Americans are so apathetic toward the coming armageddon [sic] in South Africa that they wouldn’t know a Krugerrand from a kangaroo.” Powell drove her point forward: “Other international issues may suffer even more lack of interest from blacks, for some might argue that if it doesn’t happen to one of us, why should we care?” With a message trumpeting solidarity among various global freedom struggles, Powell declared the need to look toward the future while embracing the past. She opined, “The time has come for us to expand our spheres of influence. While we continue to speak to old issues, we must champion all just causes and know

³⁶ The Krugerrand was a South African one-ounce gold coin. Amid congressional and public pressure, the Reagan administration reversed its previous stance of “constructive engagement” and banned sales of the coin in 1985 to forestall harsher measures from Congress. This act was billed as an important element of Reagan’s new limited sanctions program aimed at pressuring South Africa’s white-minority government to move away from apartheid. New Orleans newspapers covered Washington D.C. anti-Krugerrand protests and The New Orleans Committee Against Apartheid’s lobbying activities but did not specifically report Ahidiana’s activism. The local Committee convinced the City Council to halt its economic dealings with South Africa. Ahidiana member and attorney, Mtumishi St. Julien (Mwendo’s brother), is reported to have co-drafted the municipal initiative; however, this author has not located reports of Mwendo’s involvement in antiapartheid protests to date. The Associated Press, “Reagan Bans Krugerrand Imports,” *The Times-Picayune*, October 2, 1985, C-3; United Press International, “Regan Imposes Sanctions,” *The Times-Picayune*, October 12, 1985, A-21; Laurence Alexander, “N.O. Group Fighting Apartheid,” *The Times-Picayune*, A-17.

what we are talking about.” Notably including the feminist movement among the issues all black people should know more about, Powell ended the article with following statements. “As African Americans we are part of the African-American race and the human race, the important thing is effecting positive change, challenging systems to do right and helping others to live, to grow, to love. For helping others, we help ourselves, and together we will be all right.”³⁷

The women involved in this study also cited personal contact with international students and other forms of cross-cultural exchange as factors influencing their activist consciousness. For example, both Powell and Ahidiana’s Nana Anoa Nantambu cited exposure to visitors and emigrants from the African continent as important in shaping and developing their activism. Referring to a former African classmate as “a brother,” Nantambu recalled that her first encounter with a continental African was during her senior year in college. Additionally, she claimed that Africans scholars with whom she was affiliated influenced her choices of countries to visit during the 1980s. Having earned a doctorate in mathematics education from the University of Michigan in 1978, Nantambu expressed she was also motivated to travel abroad by Malcolm X’s characterization of education as a “passport.” Even as a highly-educated person, Nantambu explained, she faced marginalization in the U.S., particularly in academia. Thus, she sought a place in the developing nations of Africa or the diaspora where she could use her knowledge and skills to pursue a career in education, a field about which she was passionate. While teaching statistics in Nigeria, Nantambu recalled that cross-cultural exchange deepened her love of the profession as well as her understanding of the political and cultural uses of

³⁷ Azizi Powell, “Black People, ‘Black’ Issues,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 21, 1985, 9. Amina Baraka was also involved in antiapartheid protest work. “South Africa Program,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1985, 50.

mathematics. She later applied such skills to her community activism; in one instance, she founded a “walk-in clinic” to provide low-cost math instruction in New Orleans.³⁸

Azizi Powell recounted meeting a visitor from the continent while attending a summer leadership program. This meeting sparked her interest in and commitment to activism. She recalled “getting the nerve” to ask the man, “Excuse me, are you from Africa?” Powell said he answered, “Yes.” An impactful conversation ensued and Powell recalled the visitor expressed the belief African Americans held themselves in low regard and, thus, negatively colored how everyone else saw them. Powell said the man’s statements sparked the resolve that she needed to “do something” to help herself and other black people.³⁹

Not limited to the African continent, the importance of transnational or cross-cultural exchange in the African diaspora manifested itself in various ways through the women’s work and experiences. Travel was an especially important expression of cultural-nationalist women’s Pan-Africanist consciousness. Their activities abroad encompassed what they viewed as an effort to assist with post-colonial independence projects as well as bolster African-American self-determination through land acquisition and institution development. For instance, as Konadu has pointed out, “seasonal trips to the Republic of Guyana were . . . germane to The East.” He reported members of the organization initially travelled in 1970 to the South American nation, which was in the throes of gaining full independence from Britain.⁴⁰ The country won political independence in 1966 and established the Cooperative Republic of Guyana during the same year as the East’s initial visit. At the time, the country’s leadership struggled with developing a stable

³⁸ Nantambu, interview; Frazier, Lisa, “She Makes Math Fun,” *Times-Picayune*, April 2, 1993, B1; Lisa Frazier, “One-Sided Commitment,” *Times-Picayune*, March 15, 1995, B1.

³⁹ Azizi Powell (Deborah Manning), interview by author, telephone interview, September 8, 2013.

⁴⁰ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 34.

and self-determined government to serve all constituents' needs. Guyanese administrators faced the responsibility of achieving these goals in the midst of racial strife between an East Indian-descended (Indo-Guyanese) majority (52%) and an African-descended (Afro-Guyanese) minority (42%).⁴¹

The broad goal for The East's ties to Guyana was institution- and nation-building both for the Guyanese population and African-American nationalists. The specific purpose of their 1970 visit was attending a meeting of Pan-Africanists and black revolutionary nationalists who the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA) had assembled.⁴² ASCRIA founder and nationally-known socialist political figure, Eusi Kwayana (formerly Sidney King), arranged the conference along with Ann King, née Cook (later Tchaiko Kwayana). A radical thinker in her own right, Cook grew up in rural Georgia but travelled to various countries, in Africa and Latin America. Recognizing the common forms of oppression African-descended people faced, she emphasized the importance of global black solidarity in her writing. Having been in New York to work as an educator at City College, she connected local East members with the influential Guyanese Pan-Africanist, who she later married. Eusi Kwayana's motivation for connecting with East members was to build solidarity with oppressed African-American minorities, and thereby attract the Guyanese government's support via its Prime Minister, Forbes Burnham. Burnham wanted to encourage African-American and Afro-

⁴¹ Trevor A. Campbell, "The Making of an Organic Intellectual: Walter Rodney (1942-1980)," *Latin American Perspectives* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 57.

⁴² Founded in 1964, ASCRIA was a popular organization aimed at assisting Afro-Guyanese populations with identity formation and esteem building through embrace of African heritage. The leftist political pressure group also implemented programs in support of economic uplift encompassing agricultural, livestock, mining, and garment-making collectives. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 34-36; Eusi Kwayana, "Burnhamism, Jaganism and the People of Guyana," *The Black Scholar* 4, no. 8/9 (May-June 1973): 41; Nigel Westmaas, "An Organic Activist: Eusi Kwayana, Guyana, and Global Pan-Africanism," in *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014), 165-167; Campbell, "The Making of an Organic Intellectual," 49.

Caribbean settlement in the sparsely-populated hinterlands of the country. This was reportedly an effort to thwart land grabbing by outside entities and augment his own black voting base using Eusi Kwayana's connections to attract settlers.⁴³

Further substantiating the idea that the times she lived in would not allow her to “opt out” of world affairs, Martha Bright's narrative highlighted the Guyana travels of East-affiliated, cultural-nationalist women. Along the way, they gained experience and nurtured relationships through transnational, Pan-Africanist networks. Konadu and Rickford have explored the importance of *kazi*, or the concept of continual, vigorous work as liberatory, respectively in the East and in shaping Pan-African nationalist notions of masculinity.⁴⁴ Building upon their claims, I assert that women affiliated with the East employed the Kawaida-influenced concept of *kazi* in recounting their stories about the gendered significance of their travels abroad. In their narratives, Bright and Sanders specified the East Sisterhood, a Kawaida-based group oriented toward women's training and development, made an excursion to Guyana lasting about two weeks. Bright stated, “The sisterhood went on the Guyana project in 1971.” She said, “We worked on the . . . road project when Guyana was a newly-independent nation from England. [A] whole contingent of East sisters went . . . and we worked. We did physical work out there on that project.”⁴⁵ Her statements suggested the importance of applying *kazi* to the women's mission of

⁴³ Campbell, “The Making of an Organic Intellectual,” 57; Sanders, interview; Ann F. Cook, “Guyana as Seen by an African-American,” *Black News* 1, no. 11 (March 21, 1970), 1-9.

⁴⁴ For more information see Konadu, *A View from The East*, 47 & 127 and Rickford, “‘Kazi is the Blackest of All.’”

⁴⁵ Bright, interview, part 1 of 2; The construction program to which Bright referred is likely the Self Help Road project, which began in 1970 and was undertaken with the help of numerous volunteers from Guyana and abroad; Women in CFUN expressed a similar idea to East women's insinuation that the requirement for *kazi* cut against ideals limiting feminine roles to domesticity. Although the Mumininas wrote that women were inherently submissive, they also asserted, in a manner echoing community feminism or efficient womanhood, that “Black women will have to learn and develop whatever is needed by the nation. . . . The necessary roles will change as the needs of the nation change. . . . It might be ‘nice’ (but harmful) to think that women should just sit at home—sewing cooking, taking care of the house and children but we have to deal with reality, that WE ARE A BLACK AND

assisting in any necessary way with projects they considered to be post-colonial development and in emphasizing the nation-building work females performed as significant.

Like Bright, Sanders would not “opt out” of world affairs. She shared similar recollections of Guyana, although her itinerary took her to ASCRIA meetings and on tours rather than the road project. Sanders’ development of transnational ties shaped her future activism and career. She indicated the Guyana trip helped her develop affiliations that led her to return to the South American country in 1977. Upon return, she served 3½ years as a midwife after completing nursing studies at Harlem Hospital. Describing the relationship between transnational migrants, Black-Power political exiles seeking refuge in the country, and the Guyanese government as “complicated,” Sanders discussed the increasingly-corrupt political environment emanating from the Burnham regime’s effort to retain political and economic dominance until the 1980s. Sanders recalled returning to the United States in 1980 after a car explosion killed Walter Rodney, notable historian and prominent leader of the Working People’s Alliance, a resistance movement opposing the prevailing regime.⁴⁶

Sanders’ narrative confirmed the women’s activism developed within the context of truly turbulent times. From the racial uprisings of the Long Hot Summers to the Vietnam War, cultural-nationalist women’s activism was forged by the tempestuous 1960s and 1970s. Global independence struggles awakened the women’s concern about the fate of the world’s people of

POWERLESS PEOPLE and will have to do all that we can to gain power—self-determination, self-respect, self-defense.” Mumininas, *Mwanamke Mwananchi*, 8.

⁴⁶ Bright, interview, part 1 of 2; Sanders, interview; At least twelve females made the 1971 trip to Guyana according to Black and Angaza, “East Time-Line,” 2; The East Sisterhood’s purpose is outlined in Konadu, *A View from the East*, 50-51; In statements insinuating the significance of *kazi* in influencing a person’s work, “Sis. Shukuru” was hailed in *Black News*, in conjunction with the Harlem Hospital Nursing Corp [sic] of June 1974, as one who was committed to “Suffering, Service, [and] Sacrifice” for the people. Kasisi Jitu Weusi, “Around Our Way,” *Black News* vol. 2 no. 19 (July 1974), 14; Eusi Kwayana was also a part of the Working People’s Alliance.

color. Moreover, the roles females all over the world played in various social movements stimulated some cultural-nationalist women to challenge their own status in the Black Freedom Struggle. Concern for global social movements that were fostered within cultural-nationalist circles encouraged the women to have cross-cultural experiences and that included supporting post-colonial development projects and forging trans-national networks. In many ways, the times in which the women lived radicalized their generation.

4.1 “The Radicalization of a Generation”

In October 1966, mere months after the Meredith March, throngs descended on Howard University’s Cramton Auditorium to witness five women compete for the honor of becoming homecoming queen. In certain ways, this was like preceding homecoming affairs. Representing various black Greek-letter and foreign students’ organizations, the contestants presented speeches and elaborate skits, songs, and dances in the weeks leading up to a spirited football game. The student body voted for their favorite contestant at a dramatic coronation days before the game.⁴⁷ Yet, this particular homecoming event was anything but ordinary because it featured a unique underdog candidate who had campaigned on a platform of black pride and racial uplift. This competitor, Robin Gregory, did not processed her tresses like the other candidates and the scores of campus queens preceding her. Rather, she wore her tightly coiled, dark hair in a rounded, cropped natural called an “Afro.” After the Howardites crowding the auditorium cast their ballots, the curtains opened to reveal the rear of the newly-elected queen’s high-backed

⁴⁷ E. Fannie Granton, “Pride in Blackness and Natural: Dark Girl 100th Anniversary Homecoming Queen,” *Jet*, November 10, 1966, 48-50; Paula Giddings, interview by Judy Richardson, December 12, 1988, transcript, Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, *Eyes on the Prize II*, Interviewees, St. Louis, Missouri.

throne. As the stage slowly revolved to present the contest winner, the silhouette of her Afro could be seen in the glow of the stage lights. “There was pandemonium in the auditorium,” Gregory recalled. “People were screaming and jumping up and down, and just sort of going nuts.” She characterized the moment as one of African American “self-acceptance” after years of “self-abnegation” and shame about their natural appearances. Bursting into chants of “Black Power,” the students rang out the opening salvo of the campus movement.⁴⁸ Their robust response reflected “the radicalization of a generation.” The students’ attitudes contrasted with the reaction of top university administrator, James Nabrit, who broke the long tradition in which the president confirmed the homecoming queen with his refusal to crown a woman with an African-inspired hair style.⁴⁹

Such was the spirit of these times, which uniquely shaped the generation coming of age during the 1960s. While the first chapter of this dissertation emphasized that these young people had much in common with their predecessors, in many ways they were quite unlike their elders. For example, many older African Americans remained critical of the new, countercultural natural (and long) hair trends and radical politics as unacceptable as well as embarrassing, e.g. Nabrit. Yet the fact that Howard’s outgoing homecoming queen, Charlotte Fleming, eventually crowned Gregory signaled that many young men and women of the era supported their peers’ new, radical stances.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Robin Gregory, interview by Blackside, Inc., October 12, 1988, transcript, Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, *Eyes on the Prize II*, Interviewees, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁹ “Overdue Victory,” *The Harvard Crimson*, March 26, 1968; The term “radicalization of a generation” was taken from an Akinyele Umoja quote describing the zeitgeist producing the Black Power Movement. Akinyele Umoja, interview, *Cointelpro101*, DVD, produced by Andres Algeria, Prentis Hemphill, Anita Johnson, and Claude Marks (San Francisco, California: Freedom Archives, 2010).

⁵⁰ “Queen Crowns Queen,” *The Chicago Defender*, November 12, 1966, national edition, 5.

As with the conflict between the Howard University homecoming queen's self-representation and the college president's perception of respectable hair styles for black women, some Pan-African cultural-nationalist women involved in this study highlighted conflict with older people over hair politics and the new African-influenced aesthetics in their narratives about the times. Tamanika Howze, who was part of a CAP organization during a brief period in the 1970s, recounted her mother's negative reaction to her natural hair. She stated, "I remember I . . . went away on a [high school] senior trip to Atlantic City and I guess the humidity took my hair home and I came back and my mother said . . . 'You're not going to keep your hair like that!' And I'm like, 'Oh okay,' [and] straightened my hair." The response from an elder indicated shame and disdain emanating from internalized views about the tightly-coiled tresses as markers of social servility and marginalized racial identity. Yet despite the response, Howze proudly stated that she stopped straightening her hair upon graduation.⁵¹ She reported that she subsequently became involved with community work in 1968. She added that she has never chemically relaxed her hair partly due to Black Power era cultural-nationalist ideals and associates, such as Robert Penny, who affirmed the beauty of her unaltered features.⁵² Howze recalled, "The whole cultural movement was going on so I got a greater sense . . . and

⁵¹ Both sociologist, Orlando Patterson, and, African American women's studies expert, Noliwe Rooks, asserted the idea that hair texture, in addition to skin tone, has historically been a critical marker of social status and racial identity. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 61; Noliwe Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 13-14, eBooks on EBSCOhost edition, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com>.

⁵² Robert Lee "Rob" Penny was a local activist, poet, dramatist, professor, and department chairperson who served in the field of Africana Studies at the University of Pittsburgh for 34 years. As an individual influenced by Amiri Baraka's work and a CAP member during the 1970s, Penny was remembered as a "cultural nationalist who believed art should carry messages that strengthen community and address injustices." Penny spearheaded several companies and workshops, including the Black Horizons Theater, which he founded in conjunction with famed playwright August Wilson. "Death of a Poet: Rob Penny Told the Story of the Black Experience," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (Region Edition), March 19, 2003, A-14; Ervin Dyer, "Founder of Kuntu Repertory: Poet, Teacher, and Activist," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (Region Edition), March 18, 2003, B-6.

appreciation of who I was as a black person and [I became] more accepting of myself because I'm a sister with large lips and so that started evolving and that's when I changed my hairstyle." She went on to say that she adopted a natural hairstyle and gained greater self-acceptance because of her associates and the heady times in which they all came of age.⁵³

Having been a young adult in the 1960s, former Us Organization member Amina Thomas agreed that the radical spirit was infectious and unique. She reflected on the times during which she developed her Pan-African cultural-nationalist leanings. She recalled that she began to wear a natural hair style because she thought "the time dictated that because—the social environment of America back in the sixties . . . students, black people as a matter of fact, were more socially conscious, certainly than they are today."⁵⁴

With the radicalization of the generation coming of age in the 1960s, a new kind of female model emerged, inspiring aesthetic choices among certain women and motivating specific kinds of cultural activism related to self-image and representation. Some may argue that activists who consciously affirmed black beauty, or reflected the physical beauty and self-determined representation of African-descended people, were superficial or frivolous because these pursuits were not considered "political." However, literary scholar Farah Jasmine Griffin has confirmed the importance of such work in her assessment of Malcolm X's legacy. For Griffin, when measured against the reality of enduring white-supremacist attacks on black beauty, uplifting African-American aesthetics was "of profound significance." Griffin added, "From minstrel caricatures to 'serious scientific' studies, black difference has always been predicated on black bodies. Big black lips, nappy black hair, large black thighs and derrieres, black black [sic] skin."

⁵³ Tamanika Howze, telephone interview by author, January 19, 2014.

⁵⁴ Thomas, interview.

Such oppressive beliefs and practices, wrote Griffin, historically convinced African Americans of their own unattractiveness and aberrance, leading to such problems as colorism or the enacting and perpetuation of skin-tone discrimination within their own communities. This helps explain the importance of African-American activists countering such attacks on black standards of beauty and normalcy. Moreover, such activism was particularly important to black females who, Griffin pointed out, were judged more harshly than men according to the beauty standards of a white, heterosexist society.⁵⁵

While cultural-nationalist women like Martha Bright, Shukuru Sanders, Subira Kifano, and Vera Warren-Williams had much in common with civil rights advocates of previous phases of the Freedom Struggle, they also added that activists such as Angela Davis influenced their own thinking and work. Amina Baraka went further, specifying, “Angela is one of my heroes. Kathleen Cleaver, that was one of my heroes. Those are my heroes.”⁵⁶ Fashion scholar Tanisha Ford has written about Davis’ and Cleaver’s iconic status, in particular as Afro-wearing, influential, radical women during the Black Power Movement. She said that they persisted in donning Afros and militant clothing to represent their revolutionary politics even after the styles were stereotypically associated with alleged lawlessness.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Farah Jasmine Griffin, “‘Ironies of the Saint’: Malcolm X, Black Women, and the Price of Protection,” in *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, eds. Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 220-221; Colorism is also tied to class privilege and oppression. Studies show many lighter-skinned African Americans have historically been more advantaged than their dark-skinned counterparts in such areas as education, income, and job status. Underscoring the importance of analyzing such issues, some argue that policies designed solely to dismantle racial hierarchy leave intact or even intensify problems of skin-color discrimination. Jennifer L. Hochschild and Vesla Weaver, “The Skin Color Paradox and the American Racial Order,” *Social Forces* 86, no. 2 (December 2007): 643.

⁵⁶ A former SNCC member, the first woman to become part of the Black Panther Party’s central committee, and wife of controversial Party leader, Eldridge Cleaver, Kathleen Neal Cleaver was one of the most prominent women associated with the Black Power Movement. Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

⁵⁷ Tanisha Ford, “Soul Generation: Radical Fashion, Beauty, and the Transnational Black Liberation Movement, 1954-1980” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2011), 20; Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 105-108 & 110.

The Afro took on a political meaning during the Black Power era. To be sure, the style had African origins, imagined and real, but later it became in vogue among groups ranging from the fashion elite of the 1950s to the “Black Bohemian” artists of the early 1960s.⁵⁸ Moreover, Ford demonstrated that certain female civil rights activists (especially those associated with SNCC), who engaged in some of the same activities as Davis and Cleaver also wore the close-cropped, natural hairstyle during the earlier years of the decade. Yet, Ford theorized that the civil rights workers initially wore unstraightened hair, donned casual styles, and advocated armed self-defense due to the practical necessities of front-lines struggle and individual beliefs rather than as a result of larger organizational stances.⁵⁹ Ford noted that originally, militant body adornment and advocacy of armed struggle were not openly espoused in certain civil rights-oriented groups. Activists flaunting natural hairstyles and boldly advocating philosophies of self-defense and radical politics as part of a larger organizational and group ethos evolved over time; thus, they signaled to women interested in Black Power that a new model of African-American female activism was on the rise.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Robin Kelley, “Nap Time: Historicizing the Afro,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 1 no. 4 (December 1997): 341-345.

⁵⁹ Examples of activists in earlier Black Freedom Struggle phases who wore the iconic casual SNCC denim and natural hair or engaged in armed self-defense can be found in such figures as Ruby Doris Smith Robinson and Annie Pearl Avery. Historian Cynthia Griggs Fleming cited Robinson as one of the first women in SNCC to publicly wear her hair in a natural style and explored several instances of Robinson’s struggles with self-representation as connected to physical appearance, especially hairstyles. Avery is remembered as a young SNCC worker who carried a firearm and guarded the Civil Rights Movement participants with it. Umoja and others have asserted it is important to note armed self-defense had the distinct purpose of facilitating the nonviolent struggle for those who espoused it during the Civil Rights Movement. Conversely, in the Black Power struggle, the tenet of armed self-defense was ubiquitous and seen as a necessary response to the violence used in perpetuating systems of oppression. Tanisha C. Ford, “SNCC Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress,” *Journal of Southern History* 79, no. 3 (August 2013): 626; Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 3, 8, & 119; Faith Holsaert et al., eds., *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 266 & 353; Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back*, 2-3.

⁶⁰ Ford, “SNCC Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress,” 626-627.

Ford recalled that the younger activists of the 1960s and 1970s were seen as “soul sisters.” “Soul” was vernacular for African-American pride, an “African spirit” that survived the Middle Passage, enslavement, and Jim Crow, general feelings of kinship, hipness, and a kind of rebelliousness among various African and African-descended peoples.⁶¹ “Soul” characterized the passion, confidence, and distinctiveness making black culture beautiful.⁶² According to Karenga, “soul” was “feeling and form, body and soul, rhythm and movement . . . the essence of Blackness.”⁶³ Based on the way current and former cultural-nationalists used “soul sister” in written sources and oral interviews, the term “sister” connoted an esteemed, self-assured, African-descended female of any age. The iconic soul sisters’ Afro hair styles and open espousal of self-defense symbolized identification with soul culture and Black Power ideology just like the defiant, raised fist. A black woman wearing an Afro during this was making a political statement.⁶⁴

Recalling additional details about revolutionary soul sisters as influential models of black female self-representation, Amina Baraka explained, “We started wearing African clothes and I cut all my [straightened] hair off and had a big bush like Angela.”⁶⁵ That Amina Baraka foregrounded African-influenced clothing styles in her statements, highlighting a nuanced variation in types of Black Power-era self-representation among nationalists. To be sure, the distinctions between the various nationalist forms were somewhat fluid. Cultural-nationalist

⁶¹ Tanisha Ford, “Soul Generation,” 153; Ford, *Liberated Threads*, 5-6; Mashariki *Mfan Ya Kazi Mikono*, 6.

⁶² Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 195.

⁶³ Karenga in Halisi and Mtume, *Quotable Karenga*, 24.

⁶⁴ Kelley, “Nap Time,” 339-340.

⁶⁵ Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; “Bush” was the term for a large Afro hair style; “Angela” referred to radical activist, Angela Davis.

women's identification with radical activists like Davis and Cleaver indicated that revolutionary- and cultural-nationalists were not completely dichotomous, but the two elements were intricately interrelated. Many Pan-African cultural nationalists determined to outwardly display pride and to identify with their historical heritage as well as contemporary Africa. These outward symbols represented solidarity with anticolonialists in the context of burgeoning independence movements. Revolutionary-nationalists like Davis and Cleaver were not the only ones seen as paragons of resistive body politics; many women eschewed African-influenced self-representation as reactionary and accommodationist. Some Panther Party members even went so far as to ridicule cultural-nationalism with the derisive term, "pork-chop nationalism."⁶⁶

Believing cultural transformation was a necessary precursor to substantive economic and political change, many cultural nationalists were attracted to proud, resistive representations of African-influenced style during the Black Power-era. While still identifying with revolutionary

⁶⁶ Discussing African-influenced self-representation and ritual in opposition to such actions as campaigning against police violence, Angela Davis stated groups like CFUN "took a cultural nationalist position that assumed that if we were able to connect with the culture of our African ancestors that somehow or another these vast problems surrounding us . . . would disappear." Kathleen Cleaver expressed the belief that cultural nationalism facilitated an emotional response, but was easily commodified and did nothing to change realities of economic subjugation. Elaine Brown discussed a similar belief in her autobiography. She characterized some of the cultural-nationalist styles as more "pseudo-African garb" and "costume" than substance. These views can be seen as oversimplifications of the reality that cultural nationalists did engage in activism other than African-influenced displays and rituals. For example, CAP engaged in a "Stop Killer Cops" campaign. Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 83. Additionally, not all Black nationalists viewed cultural and revolutionary nationalism as binaries. For instance the New York Panthers took names and wore clothing from Africa. *Frontline*, "The Two Nations of Black America: Interview- Angela Davis & Interview-Kathleen Cleaver," Public Broadcasting Service, accessed February 6, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/race/>; Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 119; For other statements made by Cleaver as well as more information on the sectarian conflicts between the Panthers and Us and how these elements influenced perceptions of revolutionary and cultural nationalism, see Brown, *Fighting for US*, 115-117; For more on the pejorative uses of the terms "pig" and "pork" as connected to black nationalists' broad adoption of NOI beliefs and practices shunning pork as toxic and associated with whiteness, see Ogbar, *Black Power*, 223. Further, Panthers referred to the police as "pigs." For a discussion of how the term "pork-chop nationalism" was particularly shaped in the crucible of internecine conflict, see "By Lifting Their Hands Against 'Bunchy' and John They Lifted Their Hands Against the Best That Humanity Possesses," *The Black Panther*, March 16, 1969, 8 and Floyd W. Hayes, III and Francis A. Kiene, III, "All Power to the People": The Political Thought of Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party in *The Black Panther Party: Reconsidered*, Charles E. Jones, ed. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 165; Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour*, 219.

soul sisters, some of the women said that a distinct kind of cultural icon also inspired them.

Tamisha Peterson of The East emphasized that she thought a group of models called Grandassa were “fabulous.” Her narrative reflected how the Grandassa models who, much like noted performers Abbey Lincoln, Cicely Tyson, Nina Simone, Miriam Makeba, and Odetta, exuded natural, African-influenced style. This imprint made an impression on Peterson’s peer group during an age when black women faced pressure to deemphasize or distort features inherited from their African ancestors.⁶⁷

Arrayed in yards of fabrics roiling with vibrant colors, the Grandassa models made their first appearances in 1962 and established a base in Harlem. They staged shows titled *Naturally*.⁶⁸ These were grand fashion affairs held in cities throughout the U.S. with the aim of instructing, inspiring, and uniting various African-descended peoples. This form of politically-oriented entertainment for education’s sake was termed “revolutionary politiculture” or “edutainment”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Grandassaland was a name certain Black nationalists applied to Africa. A Grandassa Models sponsor, Elombe Brath, was a member of the Garveyist splinter group, the African Nationalist Pioneer Movement (ANPM), which came into being in Harlem following Marcus Garvey’s death in 1940. Ford pointed out the ANPM’s precedent for forwarding the idea that reclaiming the right to define and protect Black women’s beauty, femininity, and respectability were intricately bound to black liberation and to the Grandassa brand. Thus, the concept was not new when Pan-African cultural nationalists adopted it. One element making the Black Power era deployment of the ideology unique was that, as Ford explained, in the context of 1960s African independence movements, it acquired new meaning as many sought to define black post-colonial modernity with new beauty standards. Robert Harris, Nyota Harris, and Grandassa Harris, *Carlos Cooks and Black Nationalism: From Garvey to Malcolm* (Dover: Majority Press, 1992), xvii; Ford, “Soul Generation,” 79; Ford, *Liberated Threads*, 58.

⁶⁸ *Naturally* was a shortened version of the title, *Natrually ’62: The Original African Coiffure and Fashion Extravaganza Designed to Restore Our Racial Pride and Standards*. Ford, “Soul Generation,” 92 & 97; This title indicates Grandassa Models were part of a larger movement to center and uplift African-descended people’s arts, culture, and consciousness. The extended name, along with African Jazz-Arts Society (AJAS) sponsorship, indicated self-representation was seen as one interrelated aspect of many activist modes. The term “natural” in this case meant the springy or tightly coiled tresses of African and African descended people, unaltered by heating implements, chemicals, or any other products aimed at changing the hair texture. It also meant women wearing very little, if any, make-up, an act aimed at reinforcing the idea that they were beautiful without having to alter their physical appearances.

⁶⁹ “Separation,” *Ebony*, August 1970, 48; The use of the word “edutainment” to describe the Grandassa’s work is from Ford, “Soul Generation,” 80 and 92; The term “revolutionary politiculture” is from a flyer titled “Prêt Pour La Révolution!” The handbill advertised a Harlem tribute to Sékou Touré and “the heroic people of Guinea,” West Africa at which the Grandassas were to appear along with Guinean political figure and Secretary General of the Pan-

The Grandassa inherited the slogan, “Black is beautiful,” from Garveyism. Some participants and onlookers, like the budding Pan-African cultural-nationalist women involved in this study, viewed the models as “dramatizing the African Personality.” They envisioned that Grandassa performed a liberatory “Natural Black Standard of Beauty,” which initially turned the mainstream skin-tone and hair-texture hierarchy on its head in the spaces the fashion shows inhabited.⁷⁰ Ranging in color from “mocha to deep chocolate” with springs of dark hair jauntily framing their faces, the Grandassa Models’ representations sparked an awakening for some cultural-nationalist women. One of Grandassa’s main goals was nurturing a sense of admiration for people of African descent by spotlighting dark-brown women with full features wearing African-inspired clothing and hairstyles.⁷¹ Such acts were meant to represent a Pan-African version of chic and grace. Grandassa shared a politicized sense of aesthetic pride with some of

African Women’s Organization, Jeanne-Martin Cissé. Thulani Davis Collection, Manuscripts Archives and Rare Books Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁰ “Prêt Pour La Révolution!” flyer from the Thulani Davis Collection; Ford wrote, “The models shared a physiological aesthetic, which celebrated the race purity ideology undergirding the AJAS’ Black cultural nationalist worldview.” Ford, “Soul Generation,” 93; The practice of reversing or turning mainstream color and racial aesthetics upside down is what I am calling an inverted hierarchy. Within the inverted hierarchy, the word “black” was no longer assumed to have such negative connotations as dirty, evil, sinister, negatively-marked, gloomy, angry, or grim, but stood for beauty, purity, goodness, pride, and positive cultural values. An aspect of this inverted hierarchy defined dark-skinned people with tightly-coiled hair and full features as “Blacker,” “purer,” or “more African” than lighter individuals with straighter hair and keener physical traits. An expression of the inverted hierarchy can be found in Queen Mother Moore’s statements made in the documentary, *Eyes on the Prize*. Moore, whose skin tone could be considered café au lait said, “You was changed from an African into a Negro. You’ve been damaged, injured. They took your name, took your color. I don’t have my pretty black color no more. I want an Afro. I can’t even wear one ‘The man’ done messed it up.” Henry Hampton and Julian Bond, “Ain’t Gonna Shuffle No More (1964-1972),” *Eyes on the Prize VI* (Boston: Blackside, Inc., 2006), DVD. To date, there is no evidence any of the organizations studied for this dissertation solely reproduced inverted color hierarchies, which might fall within the rubric of the “dubious attempts to define essential or authentic Black identity” as discussed in *Autobiography as Activism*. Conversely, Farah Griffin and Robin Kelley asserted that nationalists have displayed a high level of appreciation for diversity and variety in Black beauty standards. Yet, both Perkins and Griffin also caution that such affirmations rarely led to progressive gender politics or allowed for a full range of personal and group expressions of self-determination. Griffin, *Ironies of the Saint*, 222-223; Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism*, 101; For more on language, transmission of meaning, and reproduction of hierarchies see, Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 220.

⁷¹ Ford, “Soul Generation,” 80-81 and 92-93.

the cultural-nationalist women who would join Kawaida-based organizations, particularly those on the East Coast.

East organization member Tamisha Peterson highlighted Grandassa's influence. She cited a particular model and hairstylist known as "Black Rose." Reiterating the popularity of Afro hair styles, Peterson explained, "All of the women who wore—naturals, we all knew Black Rose. Everybody knew Black Rose, that's where you'd go to get your hair cut nice and neatly."⁷² Peterson stressed, "Everything was just the Afro, the Afro in different shapes."⁷³

An advertisement for Black Rose's services appeared in *Black News* and highlighted the politically-charged meaning of hair at the time. "We are Afrikan peoples," the ad read. "Our hair is partial proof of our nationality. Project that image with creative hair styles fashioned to your particular face and personality."⁷⁴ At the very least, the statements on the promotional announcement reflected a viewpoint attractive to Black Rose's target clientele—that Afros and braids were political expressions. Yet, given her activities in connection with Grandassa, it is likely that the write-up revealed the stylist's sentiments about natural hair as more than pure aesthetics and as reflective of the wearers' personal identity. The statements must have also reflected the connection between style and a larger Pan-African nationalist paradigm. Black

⁷² Black Rose was Grandassa model and hairstylist Rose Nelmes. Her colorful moniker suggested commentary about coded messages in the mainstream discourse at the time. She appeared on the cover of jazz musician Lou Donaldson's 1963 *Good Gracious* album. In terms of the beauty politics of the day, reportedly, artists like Miles Davis demanded Black women be put on their covers; thus, Nelmes' and other Grandassa models' very appearances embodied the battle against dominant European-centered beauty standards. An example of her notoriety as a natural hair stylist, Black Rose was featured as one of the expert commenters interviewed for the *Ebony* magazine cover story, "Is the Afro on Its Way Out?"; Lara Pellegrinelli, "The Women Jacketed by Records," *JazzTimes*, December 2001, accessed August 20, 2013, <http://jazztimes.com/articles/20072-the-women-jacketed-by-records>; Bob Blumenthal, "More Jazz and Sex," *JazzTimes*, April 2002, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://jazztimes.com/articles/19988-more-jazz-and-sex>; Phyl Garland, "Is the Afro on Its Way Out? Ancient African Hairstyles Win New Converts," *Ebony*, February 1973, 136.

⁷³ Peterson interview, January, 25, 2013.

⁷⁴ Advertisement for Black Rose at Afrikan Beauty Center, *Black News* 2, no. 10 (October 22, 1973), 14.

Rose's ad was not the only piece about natural hair in *Black News*. "The Mwanamke Weusi" (Black Woman) column sometimes provided hair care tips, further underscoring the connection between women's particular approaches to Pan-African cultural-nationalist activism, hair, and personal politics. Moreover, writers of the column focused on the particular connection between unprocessed hair, physical health, and psychological well-being. Such media items beg further exploration of, not only the prevailing cultural-nationalist hair politics, but also the ways beauty culture was a form of activism catalyzing other advocates and used in service of self-definition, self-determination, self-esteem, racial pride, dignity, and social entrepreneurship, particularly for black women.⁷⁵

Continuing her recollections by underscoring her impression of the Grandassa models' significance, Peterson went on to state, "They were famous at that time." Outlining the models' importance in terms of rearranging traditional color hierarchies that privileged the women closest to European-centered standards of beauty, Peterson explained the Grandassa were, "Black models with color." She further hinted at the irony of seeing mostly lighter-skinned models in magazines with titles suggesting the publications might feature images of people with deeper complexions. Peterson stated the Grandassa were different from the models in *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines.⁷⁶

The natural hairstyles Grandassa models wore uplifted their African heritage in defiance of customs, both internal and external to the race, which reproduced and maintained centuries-old hierarchies privileging European and European-influenced beauty standards.⁷⁷ On a deeper

⁷⁵ For additional information on African-American beauty politics, see Tiffany Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010) & Noliwe Rooks, *Hair Raising* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

⁷⁶ Peterson interview, January, 25, 2013.

⁷⁷ Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry*, 119.

level, public performances of self-representation such as fashion shows were meant as exercises in control over the “ideological framework for representations of blackness.” Moreover, the fashion shows displayed a form of “black womanhood” which still operated within the kinds of conservative notions of femaleness many feminists challenged. It should be remembered, however, that such gendered performances of race pride were shaped within the context of a society that denigrated black women as not only “morally inferior” and sexually available, but simultaneously as physically unattractive, domineering, and masculine.⁷⁸

Thus, “feminine” fashions on brown-skinned females with natural hair remained attractive to many cultural-nationalist women as a means of uplifting soulful and politicized images of black womanhood. The act was an affirmation of themselves and others facing common forms of oppression, including negative assessments of their physical beauty, which were often used as proxies for judging allegedly derogatory characteristics and low social value. According to Fleming, African-descended women’s features “marked them for life.”⁷⁹ However, the new natural and African-centered representations of the 1960s and early 1970s displayed the women’s defiance of cultural hegemony as expressed through pressure to mask or change their own features. Such acts were carried out in order to assimilate to those standards of beauty privileging women with lighter skin and eyes, more aquiline noses, thinner lips, and straighter hair. In short, “Black women had to contest their wholesale definition as non-beauties,” so many

⁷⁸ Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry*, 118; Ford, *Soul Generation*, 88.

⁷⁹ Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry*, 118-119.

reveled in the kinds of performances Grandassa put on.⁸⁰ For example, one of the 1970 contestants for Miss Black Cleveland represented that city's CAP affiliate, Afro Set.⁸¹

Spectacular displays of natural and African-influenced styles on browner-skinned women were affirmations of personal and group value. Such realities explain the Pan-African cultural nationalists' belief that the oppressed Black person needed to create a "new ideological identity" before a revolt could occur lest the same damaging hierarchies be reproduced.⁸² This ideology was attractive to the women who would become Pan-African cultural nationalists and incorporate such identity politics into their own beliefs and activism. As such, both the models and the spectators participated in the process of re-shaping racial identities.

In the mid-1960s, Grandassa's brand of "revolutionary politiculture" gained a participant in Amina Baraka. She pointed out that the models' local imprint on the black-nationalist representational culture of the day which, preceded her husband's influence. Amina Baraka said her exposure to the group came "before I met LeRoi Jones because they really started in Harlem." She also stated that her own African-centered mode of self-representation was "*a lot* influenced by . . . the Grandassa Models." Recalling the group's role in awakening her own consciousness, Baraka wondered in amazement why she had previously rated and scaled black women's varied skin tones and hair textures. She said, "When I saw those women, those black women up in Harlem, with them naturals, and them dark skins . . . I tried to figure out why did I think, because I had one drop of Native American, why is it that I thought light-skinned women

⁸⁰ Maxine Leeds Craig, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen?: Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5.

⁸¹ Alvin Ward, "Miss Black Cleveland is Selected at Pageant," *Call and Post*, July 11, 1970, 4A.

⁸² Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 169.

or women with ‘nappy hair’ in quotes [were better or worse than each other] . . . how did I get involved in that?”⁸³

Baraka attributed her previous misinformed perceptions to the fact that she had to literally “take the A train” to Harlem in the early 1960s to partake of Grandassa’s “daily diet” of self-esteem and cultural affirmation.⁸⁴ She came of age on a steady intake of negative media images both in the mainstream and the black press. Also mentioning the popular *Ebony* magazine, she criticized the prevailing tendency to feature certain models because they were “light-skinned women and all their hair was straight.” She went on to explain how Grandassa’s style and activist techniques filtered into her hometown, which would become the headquarters of CFUN. She stated, “When LeRoi Jones came to Newark, he brought that diet [of cultural affirmation] with him.” Continuing, she added that the Grandassa approach helped prompt her conversion to Pan-African cultural nationalism. Amina Baraka recalled that she questioned, “Where had we been all this time?”⁸⁵

Thus, for some Pan-African cultural-nationalists, outward identification with Africa was a direction they took once they experienced a personal awakening to the ways they had learned and internalized negative ideas about their own race. It was the sign of a conversion that stimulated Black consciousness. For others, cultural nationalism was a comfortable medium between nonviolent resistance and the strident tactics of revolutionary nationalists like the Panthers. Still others saw it as an indispensable step toward revolution.

⁸³ Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

⁸⁴ The reference to “Take the A Train” is Amina Baraka’s. Her statement alluded to the Billy Strayhorn jazz standard, which became a trademark of Duke Ellington and his orchestra. The song’s subject was the New York City transit system’s A subway line, which provided a quick route to Harlem. Andrew R. Chow, “Celebrating Strayhorn,” *New York Times* (Late Edition, East Coast), November 28, 2017, C2.

⁸⁵ Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

Characterizing attention the Panthers attracted from law enforcement as “trouble,” Tamisha Peterson recognized the New York Panthers were subjected to a flood of police raids, armed attacks, and arrests. She reported leaving the BPP for the Pan-African cultural-nationalist East Organization.⁸⁶ “I was part of that first,” she said, “but—the Panther Party was—getting into a bunch of trouble. I saw them as a group without really good leadership. Eldridge Cleaver was not a good leader. A lot of people [were] getting jailed unnecessarily because a lot of young, young kids were attracted to the program and they were being misled—in my eyes.”⁸⁷

In a statement reiterating the idea that many activists did not view revolutionary and cultural nationalism as opposites, but saw the philosophies as shaded approaches to achieving liberation, Tamisha Peterson noted, “There were a lot of good things going on but, there were too many negatives and too many negatives coming from the police that they couldn’t handle. . . . It was just out of their control . . . so, that’s what turned me from the Panthers.” Revealing a major,

⁸⁶ For more information on the New York Panthers and law enforcement violence and repression see Jamal Joseph, *Panther Baby*, (New York: Algonquin Books, 2012), 143; Akinyele Omowale Umoja, “Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party,” in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, ed. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 12-13.

⁸⁷ See Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014 for Weusi’s statements about being in San Francisco and offering *Black News* alongside with *The Black Panther: Black Community News Service* newspaper as well as Wali’s recollections that a Panther delivered the *Black News* editions she sold at work in New York City; Peterson interview; Ahidiana’s, Kalamu ya Salaam, posed a similar critique of Eldridge Cleaver’s leadership stating, “The Panthers were full of street hustlers because of—Cleaver’s emphasis on the lumpen proletariat being a revolutionary force and we said the lumpen is *not* a revolutionary force because they are amoral. They don’t have morals. They will do anything to get what they want depending on that which they want at the moment and that’s part of what destroyed the Panthers, internally.” Kalamu ya Salaam, interview; Amiri Baraka wrote about similar ideas. Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), “Black Liberation/Socialist Revolution,” in *Daggers and Javelins: Essays of Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones)* (New York: Quill, 1984), 98; Charles E. Jones and Judson L. Jeffries have analyzed the Panthers, stating the average member was indeed a “young adolescent still in search of adulthood who was likely a high school or college student.” Jones and Jeffries emphasized that hoodlums and thugs did not dominate the Panthers’ ranks and the BPP broadened the definition of the lumpen concept to include the working poor. The authors also demonstrated the Panthers were quite diverse in background despite their lumpenized image. Nevertheless, Chris Booker theorized that the emphasis on the lumpen was a key factor in the organization’s demise. Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party: Reconsidered* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 43-47 and 337. For more information on state attacks against the New York Panthers, the Panther 21 trial, and its toll on the defendants’ families, see Jamal Joseph, *Panther Baby: A Life of Rebellion and Reinvention* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2012), 77, 103, and 106-107.

life-changing event pushing her toward a Kwaiaida-influenced cultural-nationalist organization, Peterson added, “Plus another thing is my husband was part of this fabricated Panther 13 and he had run off to some place in hiding so, I was finished with that.”⁸⁸

Peterson went on to explain that while her husband was in hiding, she was forced to close their jointly-owned bookstore, Richardson’s African American Books. During this period in early 1970, some cultural nationalists asked her, “Well, why don’t you come to The East, check it out?” Peterson said their collegiality drew her. She recalled, “I liked what I saw over there,” and she joined.⁸⁹

Imani Omotayo (pseud.) shared a similar view about finding cultural nationalism an intermediate choice between revolutionary nationalism and more conservative, nonviolent civil rights organizations. She remembered feeling her activism “should be more militant, but not as militant as the Panthers.” Reiterating the idea that overt African pride was an important element drawing certain activists to Pan-African cultural nationalism, Omotayo continued, “and then I

⁸⁸ Peterson Interview; The Panther 13 group to whom Peterson referred was also known as the Panther 21. Twenty-one were arrested and 13 were charged together and imprisoned for conspiracy to bomb five Manhattan department stores, sections of the New Haven commuter railroad, the Bronx Botanical Gardens, carrying dangerous weapons and plotting to attack several police precincts. Peterson stated her husband at the time was Fred Richardson. Richardson was the twenty-second defendant in the trial, although attorneys for the others reportedly said the former Deputy Minister of Information had been expelled from the Party a year prior to the 1970 trial. *The Black Panther* newspaper lists Richardson’s expulsion only with the 12 other defendants who were deemed “renegades and/or counterrevolutionary” in April 1969. According to the *New York Times*, Fred Richardson failed to appear for a required pretrial hearing after having been released on \$25,000 bond. A Liberation News Service article stated Richardson had not been seen or heard from since he had been bailed out of jail. *The Black Panther*, April 27, 1969. 5; Edith Evans Asbury, “16 Black Panthers Go on Trial Tomorrow in State Court Here,” *New York Times*, 55, February 1, 1970; Liberation News Service 1970 Pages; “Panther 21 Trial Opens in New York,” Liberation News Service packet 232, February 7, 1970, Liberation News Service 1968-1981 Digital Archive, accessed October 8, 2013, <http://www.lns-archive.org/>.

⁸⁹ The story about the bookstore is reported in *A View from the East*; however, Peterson’s name is cited as Wendy Richardson and her husband was recorded as deceased at the time. Peterson did go by the name Wendie Richardson but she remembered selling bookstore items and donating those she could not sell to The East attempting to put Richardson’s African American Bookstore on the market after she and Fred parted ways. The East’s Akiba Mkuu Bookshop opened shortly thereafter. Peterson, interview; Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 74.

liked the cultural aspect because I felt like people were ashamed of identifying with Africa, which we still were during the 1960s.” She furthermore reflected on the pro-black spirit of the times by saying, “When the Black Power Movement came, a lot of people who didn’t [previously] join any organization were suddenly very proud of . . . black, real proud to have Afros and big lips, big earrings, the clothes.” Omotayo said, “So, I think that was the main reason I joined [the Us] organization.” This statement capped off her recollections about the attractiveness of Pan-African cultural nationalism as a midpoint between more strident and more assimilationist activist forms, the importance of proud African-identified self-representation, and the climate of the 1960s.⁹⁰ According to the women’s narratives, the era radicalized their generation, influencing their identification with new kinds of activism that inspired them to draw from older, black-nationalist traditions. This perfect storm of elements would shape their approaches to the Black Freedom Struggle.

4.2 “Say it Loud!”

After making the proclamation, “Say it Loud!” the next line of James Brown’s 1968 Black Power anthem unapologetically declared, “I’m black and I’m proud!” Such songs, among others, like Nina Simone’s “Young, Gifted, and Black,” were key in trumpeting the kind of race consciousness that made Black Power different from the Civil Rights Movement.⁹¹ In the essay “‘Black’ is a Country,” Amiri Baraka wrote that “black” constituted a nation within a nation, claiming African Americans should use their peripheral positions as sources of fortitude and

⁹⁰ Omotayo, interview.

⁹¹ Gregory K. Freeland, “‘We’re a Winner’: Popular Music and the Black Power Movement,” *Social Movement Studies* 8 (August 2009): 261; Beatty, interview.

encouragement. According to Baraka, African Americans needed to fight for independence over and above separation or assimilation. He emphasized that the black race was a nation within a nation, united by complexion, customs, and culture.⁹² Needless to say, most African Americans did not relocate to Africa, nor did they establish an independent North American state, but many embarked on a “resilient” quest for self-determination and identity reinforcement.⁹³ Black identity, racial and ethnic consciousness, pride, and self-determination stood out as proponents’ main concerns.⁹⁴ According to Mtamanika Beatty, “those are the kinds of things that begin to ignite you to look at yourself a little bit differently.”⁹⁵

Both Azizi Powell and Imani Omotayo (pseud.) recalled how the changing times and growing emphasis on racial and ethnic pride shaped her activist choices. Powell stated, “One of the things that I liked about the whole cultural nationalism as opposed to other forms of nationalism [was that] cultural nationalism was interested in black people understanding and appreciating and celebrating their cultural roots and heritage and as an African people.”⁹⁶ As Imani Omotayo put it, the Us Organization appealed to some activists because of what they viewed as members’ overt identification with Africa. Emphasizing Martin Luther King, Jr.’s enduring popularity while also pointing out Black Power supporters’ critiques of the Civil Rights Movement’s leadership, she said, “I mean I always respected Dr. King, but they were being called Uncle Toms.” If a young person joined civil-rights organizations, she asserted, “it was

⁹² Joseph, *Waiting ‘til the Midnight Hour*, 120.

⁹³ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 208.

⁹⁴ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 2.

⁹⁵ Beatty, interview.

⁹⁶ Powell, interview.

like, you weren't proud. I felt prouder becoming a Panther or, becoming a member of Us Organization . . . though I respected the Civil Rights Movement."⁹⁷

Imani Omotayo highlighted the racialized (and suggested the gendered) symbolism of the Afro style as a validation of blackness and African heritage as well as a rejection of standards subjecting black women to different levels of scrutiny than the men who did not choose to straighten their tightly-spiraled locks.⁹⁸ She stated, "When you'd hear Dr. Karenga or some of his representatives, really you felt almost embarrassed to be sitting there with your hair . . . because when we joined, we had straightened hair, we had [straight] perms, wigs or whatever and you felt like, well, why do I feel like I need to press my hair or why does that have to be my standard of beauty? Why do I have to adopt someone else's standard of beauty when I can have my own?"⁹⁹

Imani Omotayo continued by emphasizing some of her generation's values, which made the Black Power era different from the Civil Rights Movement. Asserting a self-narrative that constructed her ethnicity as essentially "African," Omotayo declared, "Back to that identification with Africa because, you know, we're African people. Why should we look this way? Why should we try to look that way? Because that's not the way we're born. Why can't we be proud of the way we look?"¹⁰⁰ The belief that African-American culture was fundamentally African was an established viewpoint propagated by academics as far back as Melville Herskovits and

⁹⁷ Omotayo, interview.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 60-61; The specific connection of hair styles to racialized sexism came from, Kiini Ibura Salaam, "'There's No Racism Here?' A Black Woman in the Dominican Republic," *Writings*, accessed March 11, 2014, kiiniibura.com.

⁹⁹ Omotayo, interview.

¹⁰⁰ Omotayo, interview.

Branislaw Malinowski.¹⁰¹ Yet, openly embracing African pride was not an integrationist practice. Advocating black economic and social assimilation, scholars like E. Franklin Frazier were concerned that contemporary theorists “othered” and pathologized black people as socially “primitive” due to African heritage and racial characteristics that they viewed as inherently inferior. Thus, Frazier refuted the idea that the African elements in black community culture remained intact and traced black familial “differences” (read “abnormalities”) to the damaging outcomes of such historical forces as slavery and urbanization. One effect Frazier highlighted as particularly problematic was female-centered households.¹⁰² As a testament to the contemporary appeal of Frazier’s theory, it should be noted that Senator Daniel Moynihan referenced the notable socialists’ theses for the aforementioned 1965 report. The proud espousal of a racial identity claiming black Americans were essentially African, in the historical and modern sense, became a specific tenet of Black Power. According to historian James Meriwether, such an interpretation was not specifically connected to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. It developed in the context of proliferating African independence movements.¹⁰³

Further explaining the appeal of theories propagated within Black Power nationalism to counteract negative stereotypes and bolster racial and ethnic pride, Imani Omotayo juxtaposed them against mainstream images, which relied heavily on racist conceptions of Africa as inherently inferior, uncivilized, and insignificant, particularly because it was not incorporated

¹⁰¹ Moses, *Afrotopia*, 14.

¹⁰² E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), vii-ix, 368; Charles E. Jarmon, "E. Franklin Frazier's Sociology of Race and Class in Black America," *Black Scholar* 43 (Spring 2013): 95.

¹⁰³ James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 7.

into human history.¹⁰⁴ Contrasting the falsified notions about Africans with a swaggering view of black history, she reminisced, “The portrayal of Africa was that these were people swinging through trees and backwards and so, finding out that we were descendants of kings and queens, there was Timbuktu, Mali [and] there was history.” Highlighting the importance of cultural-nationalist literacy practices for developing confidence in the concept of blackness, Omotayo reminisced, “You did learn some history in Kawaita, a lot more history than you had all your life, so all of a sudden, we studied all the different scholars and cultures and people from Africa and whereas before you had a negative picture, so I think that was another important thing, was that pride, that self-pride.”¹⁰⁵ Omotayo’s narrative contained elements reflecting older ideologies such as the vindicationism discussed in Chapter One. The uniqueness of the times also showed in her choice to vigorously embrace race pride and the connectedness of modern Africans to Black Americans. She did so in the process of discussing the elements drawing her to cultural nationalism despite the fact that she initially wanted to join the Civil Rights Movement.

In a similar manner, Azizi Powell reported having initially been attracted to civil rights work through a New Jersey NAACP branch but subsequently being drawn to cultural nationalism because she agreed with the philosophy that black Americans were “an African people” among other reasons. Powell was even more direct than Omotayo in specifically tying her understanding of the concept to the swelling tide of African independence movements. Powell stated, “I liked . . . [the] point that we as African-American people are connected to Africa and one of the things that I should point out is that during the 1960s different African

¹⁰⁴ Molefe Kete Asante paraphrasing Hegel in “The Western Media and the Falsification of Africa: Complications of Value and Evaluation,” *China Media Research* 9, no. 2 (2013): 64-65. Such historiographical discussions can also be found in the black press, for instance in Simon Anekwe, “The Significance of African History,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 12, 1967, 15.

¹⁰⁵ Omotayo, interview.

countries were becoming independent from the colonial nations, Britain, France, Portugal, the Dutch. . . . So, you were reading in the paper about Ghana getting its independence and this other country getting its independence and that other African country.” Like Omotayo, Powell linked a belief in the innate Africanness of African Americans to the concept of black pride. She contended, “There was a blossoming of pride and the realization that . . . we as black people don’t have any reason to be ashamed of being black and being an African person.”¹⁰⁶ Her story reflected that African anticolonialism influenced aspects of race and ethnic pride and factored in radicalizing the Black Power generation.

¹⁰⁶ Powell, interview.

5 “EDUCATION DIDN’T MEAN A DEGREE, IT [MEANT] HOW WE SERVE[D] OUR RACE AND ALL HUMANITY”: CAMPUS/COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS¹

During the height of the Black Power Movement in December 1968, protesting students waged a massive five-month strike, at one point occupying a building at San Francisco State College where social sciences and business courses were in session. One of their main aims was eliminating racism in higher education, a goal that echoed Black Power’s compelling sense of social obligation. In the midst of the occupation, an activist reportedly yelled, “We’re going to close it down. It’s the most racist building on campus.”² Led by the Black Student Union with support from a multiethnic group of activists involved with the World Liberation Front, as well as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), an estimated 700 students participated that day alone. The strike shook the entire campus as well as the greater San Francisco area, drawing support from faculty and black community leaders alike. The protestors’ actions also put them in direct opposition to conservative Governor Ronald Reagan and college administrators, who met the students’ demands with club-wielding police, arrests, and suspensions.³ The striking students’ demands included development of autonomous Black and Ethnic Studies Programs with adequate full-time faculty and open admissions for nonwhite students. San Francisco State’s Black Student Union went down in history as the first organization during the course of the Student Movement to institutionalize a Black Studies Department and degree at a four-year college.⁴ Many histories of the Black Campus Movement emphasize the importance of campus

¹ Nana Anoa Nantambu put these lyrics in a song, which she dedicated to Carter G. Woodson. Nantambu, interview.

² Wallace Turner, “Police Repel Students at College in San Francisco,” *The New York Times*, December 4, 1968, 26.

³ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 7; Turner, “Police Repel Students,” 26.

⁴ Joseph, *Waiting ‘til the Midnight Hour*, 215; Oba T’Shaka, “Africana Studies Department History: San Francisco State University,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 5, no. 7 (October 2012): 21-24.

activism during the late 1960s and early 1970s in catalyzing the Black Studies Movement and instating the field in institutions of higher education. Deepening our knowledge about female Pan-African cultural-nationalist activists of the era, however, requires a greater understanding of the synergy between students and communities.

The San Francisco State College uprising is considered the most significant Black Campus Movement event because of its intensity, scale, and impact. Many experts agree such student activism catalyzed the reorganization of academia, broadening its inclusiveness and mission as well as altering the meaning of knowledge production.⁵ This period of protest also directly and indirectly shaped many of the women involved in this study. They in turn took many core Campus and Black Studies Movement missions to their grassroots-level, cultural-nationalist work.⁶ To understand key aspects of the women's cultural-nationalist activism, one has to explore the reality that many came of age during or shortly after the Black Campus and Black Studies Movements and acted upon some of their core tenets within community-based, Kawaiida-influenced organizations.

The post-World War II period saw several trends in black higher education, which influenced college campuses and the people who inhabited them. Growing numbers of African Americans at predominantly-white colleges and universities (PWIs), the rising tide of the student

⁵ Jonathan B. Fenderson, "'When the Revolution Comes': New Perspectives on Black Student Activism and the Black Studies Movement," *The Journal of African American History* 98 (Fall 2013): 619.

⁶ Fenderson called Afrocentricity "the living part of the black intellectual tradition." Cultural nationalists incorporated the core ideals of what would become known by the 1980s as Afrocentricity. For instance, many cultural nationalists advocated centering Africa and African-descended people in the construction of knowledge about, examination, and teaching of historical, political, social, and cultural phenomena. Building upon Fenderson's claim, this author asserts cultural nationalists' push for community control of schools, independent schools, bookstores, independent presses, study groups, and other such activities were part of the living traditions of black intellectualism. Women were central to such cultural-nationalist pursuits and, thus, were at the heart of this "living part of the black intellectual tradition." Fenderson, "'When the Revolution Comes,'" 617.

movement, and burgeoning Black Studies curricula composed the context for Black Power on campuses. This context would influence many women who eventually developed Pan-African cultural-nationalist sentiment.

One particular phenomenon in post-World War II higher education was the rising number of African Americans at predominantly-white colleges and universities. Though a few black students had matriculated at PWIs from the late 1790s through the mid-1960s, their numbers grew exponentially beginning in the early 1970s.⁷ According to historian, Martha Biondi, the initial group entering predominantly-white institutions in the latter 20th century comprised a “critical mass” of black students attending such schools.⁸

The upsurge in numbers of African Americans on college campuses also included professors, staff members, and administrators. The growth of black faculty and staff at predominantly-white educational establishments took place alongside directives such as President Lyndon B. Johnson’s EO 11246, which broadened President John Kennedy’s EO 10925 requiring government contractors to take “affirmative action” to avoid discriminating against employees and applicants based on “race, creed, color, or national origin.”⁹ Though increasing numbers of African Americans gained legal access to PWIs in the 1960s and 70s, many found racially-exclusive, white-supremacist cultures continued to marginalize and exclude African Americans while pushing forward the unspoken centrality and normalcy of whiteness.¹⁰

⁷ Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Students and the Radical Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 9.

⁸ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 2.

⁹ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Executive Order 10925, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.eeoc.gov/>.

¹⁰ Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 151.

For example, though they found employment in the ivory tower, many black faculty members faced the harsh reality that tenure was difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, increasing numbers of black faculty on campus made a difference in some Pan-African cultural-nationalist women's sense of racial awareness, whether or not the educators earned tenure.

An additional influencing factor was the broader context of the national campus movement, during which protestors of all races and ethnicities participated in marches, demonstrations, campus take-overs, sit-ins, and strikes against what they perceived to be unjust policies such as racism, the lack of free speech and press, anticommunism, classism, and the Vietnam War. This was the period of the Kent State and Jackson State student murders when law enforcement fired on campus protestors. In this context, many young dissenters demanded classes in subjects ranging from African-American history to black literature, an act which both shaped and was shaped by the larger black community.

The Black Studies curriculum was one element emerging from the aforementioned demands in the late 1960s. The field was alternately called Africana, Afro-American, and African Studies. It was the academic outgrowth of Black Power but it was also considered one expression of the broader movement undertaken by students from various races and which burst onto the scene at colleges and universities in the 1960s. The thrust creating Black Studies had antecedents in the Civil Rights and 1964 Free Speech Movements. Black campus activists were peers of SDS members and other young people associated with the New Left who, at times, supported students of color in their pursuit of educational egalitarianism. Though fraught with challenges such as underfunding and a dearth of doctoral-degree holders to advance the field, the institutionalization of African American Studies was a triumph for student activists.¹¹

¹¹ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 5.

Emboldened by the movement's successes and undeterred by its setbacks, the women involved in this study extended the goals and tactics of the Black Studies Movement into their community-based activism in many instances, enacting key tenets on the grassroots level. Likewise, grassroots community activism shaped them in many ways, especially in relation to their perceptions of the purpose of education.

Historian Martha Biondi noted African-American women were at the center of the Brooklyn College student protests for open admissions and the local Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggle for community control of schools, drawing connections between both strikes through common, male leadership. She laid the groundwork for placing the campus movement and Black Power era community activism in conversation; however, she did not detail the work of the female activists involved in both campus and community activism. Likewise, in his piece, "Message from the Grassroots," Komozi Woodard emphasized the work of student activists who fused with Newark-area, grassroots residents, artists, and intelligentsia to perform local Black Power Movement work. Woodard also focused on males.¹² Pan-African cultural-nationalist activism around community control of schools and independent institutional formation pointed toward the idea that involved activists were also concerned with similar goals as those of the Campus Movement. Pan-African nationalists' aims included reorienting African Americans, who they viewed as miseducated according to American standards. Mainstream primary and secondary education, they believed, reinforced dependence and servility much in the same way that universities perpetuated "academic slavery."¹³

¹² Komozi Woodard, "Message from the Grassroots: The Black Power Experiment in Newark, New Jersey," in *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 80.

¹³ Kalamu ya Salaam, "The Right and Responsibility to Educate Black Children is Finally Ours Alone!," 4, c. 1974, Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection; Rogers, 92.

Extending African American Studies expert Ibram Rogers' key Campus-Movement tenets, this study asserts that by participating in community activism, which was meant to expose and decenter the "hidden curriculum" of white normalcy for learners of all ages, cultural nationalists enacted "grassroots altruism." That is, they pushed existing educational institutions or erected independent ones to meet the needs of local communities rather than molding students to fulfill roles set by what were considered outside entities. It was in this context that some students honed their organizing skills during the Campus Movement, and their interest in activism was piqued as people pursued Black Studies programs. They carried these elements with them into their work in neighborhood Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations. Rogers specifically cited black student unions, student government associations, Black Studies offices, and black cultural centers as bases for the many shades of "reformist and revolutionary community activism" in which both males and females engaged in the wake of the Black Campus Movement.¹⁴ Biondi added that black women were "at the center" of many late 1960s campus protests and community uprisings. She held that exploring their relationships to the movements is important because it "balances the largely masculinist portrait of Black Power politics and suggests a broader range of influences, especially at the grassroots, on a generation that venerated Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon."¹⁵

¹⁴ The term "hidden curriculum" is from Kehinde Andrews, "Toward a Black Radical Independent Education: Black Radicalism, Independence and Supplementary School Movement," *The Journal of Negro Education* 83, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 5-14; Rogers used "Grassroots altruism" to refer to African American students' desire to help themselves and members of their communities without being culturally, economically, or politically removed from the black masses. Grassroots altruism opposed the idea that racial progress would be primarily achieved through personal advancement "up the American ladder of success." Student activists who advocated grassroots altruism rejected the notion that racial progress would be attained solely because of the paths they blazed in society or via their existence as role models. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 5 & 156-158.

¹⁵ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 117-118.

The Black Campus Movement was a strain of the activism occurring during the Black Power Movement. Both Rogers and Biondi also agreed that the Black Campus Movement was part of the same milieu but at the same time distinct from the campus movements undertaken by other racial groups during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Black Campus Movement also differed from black student off-campus activism during the Civil Rights Movement, which he asserts lasted from 1954 to 1965. Although intertwined with other phases of what Rogers described as the 1919-1972 Long Black Student Movement, he also forwarded the idea that the Black Campus Movement had unique characteristics.

The struggle among student black nationalists at both PWIs and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) had several aims. On some levels, it sought to transform higher education to a more democratic and ethical form.¹⁶ Yet, this new defiant era of black student activism differed from the sit-ins of the early 1960s, which emphasized gentility. Students of the Campus Movement spoke more aggressively, dressed differently, and challenged liberal definitions of civility in a myriad of ways. This new group wanted self-determination, social mobility, and a centering of black politics, literature, culture, psychology, history, and economic equality.¹⁷ As Ahidiana's Tayari kwa Salaam stated, "We felt that we were working for inclusion but . . . there was a both/and in there."¹⁸ Thus, these aims were part of the larger Black Power thrust but informed the groups' goals down to the local level.¹⁹

¹⁶ Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 3.

¹⁷ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 172-173; Biondi, 13.

¹⁸ Tayarai kwa Salaam, interview.

¹⁹ Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 25-40.

As previously outlined, the legacy and influence of such leaders as Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, Stokely Carmichael, and Martin Luther King, Jr. catalyzed the generation's activism. Moreover, the counterculture, the Free Speech Movement, anti-Vietnam War protests, urban uprisings, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Long Student Movement composed the milieu in which the Black Campus and Black Studies Movements developed. Martha Bright reflected on the times shaping her activism recalling, "Dr. King was assassinated while I was a college student. Malcolm died when I was in the eleventh grade of high school. . . . The March on Washington happened when I was a high school student. . . . All of these things were happening. The times, the years that I lived in molded me." Furthermore, she narrated a story highlighting awareness of how her actions reflected broader activist forms, stating that students were protesting across the country. Bright punctuated her thoughts with the declaration, "This was hot times!" [sic]²⁰

According to Biondi, African-American students at more than 200 colleges during the era were imbued with a sense of "power," "purpose," "urgency," and "context of crisis" which would give rise to an unparalleled stage in the Black Freedom Struggle. Biondi emphasized how the Black Campus Movement deeply changed colleges. It also transformed activists of other races during the era, sparking new forms of student protest. This author highlights the fact that the conflict also inspired differing resistance methods and ideologies among female foot soldiers, who would take their newfound ideals and tactics to implement them on a grassroots level in Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations and local communities.²¹

²⁰ Bright, interview.

²¹ Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 1, 4, & 6.

5.1 *Becoming Political Women in the North*

Jaribu Hill's personal narrative also marked campus protest as a key moment of activist conversion, yet other aspects of her young life molded her sensibilities as well. Hill was born in Indiana in 1949. Her family left the state when she was an infant. They migrated to Ohio, where young Jaribu (then Sandra) attended majority-black schools during the 1950s. While she emphasized her time in primarily-black schools as an era during which dedicated teachers were a part of the community's fabric and, thus, committed to assisting its development, Hill also pointed out that her educational experience took place in segregated institutions, which were deprived in terms of "physical plants, amenities, and resources."²²

The stark reality of having grown up in "the other America" during an age of unprecedented affluence raised questions in Hill's mind about the persistent nature of inequality.²³ The fact that she and her three siblings lived in "squalor in the richest country in the world" derived from her childhood experiences. They were the children of Elsie Nelson Banks, who had separated from their father, Amos Harrison Banks, Sr. In 1966 the Reverend Banks died in Chicago. Faced with life as a black single mother with relatively limited education and training, Elsie Banks struggled with underemployment, and later joblessness, as the clerk

²² Hill attended public elementary and high school in Cleveland where de facto segregation characterized the educational system. An influx of Eastern European immigrants overlapped with the migration of Southern African Americans during the early part of the 20th century. Low-income minorities continued to make the city of Cleveland home during the years just after World War II. After the Second World War, their in-migration coincided with white flight, deindustrialization, and a resulting decrease in the city's tax base and social services. One particular result was a segregated inner-city school system, which had one of the lowest staff to student and pupil expenditure ratios in the state. Cleveland's public school system became more segregated and under-resourced even as federal school desegregation orders were being handed down in the shadow of Brown. For more information, see Edward M. Miggins, "'No Crystal Stair': The Cleveland Public Schools and the Struggle for Equality, 1900-1930," *Journal of Urban History* 40 no. 4 (2014): 671-698 and James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

²³ Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, 1970 printing (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 1.

positions she held neither paid enough to cover mounting household expenses, nor allowed time for her to sufficiently care for the children. The memory that her family was forced to survive on public assistance and charity left a bitter taste in Jaribu Hill's mouth.²⁴

The framework for contextualizing and acting on the intersecting forms of inequity Hill so intimately knew developed while she was attending an HBCU in Ohio. As an undergraduate at Central State University during the late 1960s, Hill witnessed her colleagues' organized action in response to the slayings of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. Much like Nana Anoa Nantambu, Hill recounted that, despite the race pride she developed under the care of instructors in segregated schools, she arrived at college lacking the depth of knowledge she would soon acquire as a direct and indirect result of the Black Campus Movement—ways of knowing that Pan-African cultural nationalists would come to value as cornerstones of true liberation. She described her young-adult self as “a fool,” devoid of “historical memory,” and unaware of the meaning of being black and female in America. However, Hill opined that her classmates' spirit of urgency and social responsibility set her on a path toward deeper knowledge and greater advocacy for freedom and equality.²⁵

Hill delineated an early phase of her awakening during which politically-active students identified her potential, drew connections between the previous and present phases of the Long Black Freedom Struggle, stimulated cultural literacy practices, and broadened her activist network. Hill framed the moment as one of conversion from a mischievous freshman rebelling against a strict upbringing, to a more mature student becoming what she termed a “political

²⁴ Hill interview. The number of three siblings and Amos Harrison Banks, Sr.'s death date came from “Family, Friends Remember Amos Harrison Banks, Jr.,” *Jackson Advocate*, March 5, 2009, 6A. “Pastoral History,” Union Grove Missionary Baptist Church (Cleveland, Ohio), accessed May 23, 2014, http://ugmbc.org/pastoral_history.

²⁵ Hill interview; Jaribu Hill, “Excerpts from a Life Standing at the Well,” *The Black Scholar* 36 no.1 (Spring 2006): 31.

woman.” Drawn to her classmates’ commemoration of Malcolm X, she met young activists such as Alton Patterson and Michael (Tarif) Warren on May 19, 1967 at a campus event.²⁶ She asked them, “What’s with the black armbands?” Hill said their reply was, “Sister, this is for El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, better known as Malcolm X.” She further recounted that her perplexed response was simply, “Who?” At this memorable point in time, said Hill, the student-activists “started to do serious teaching” with her. They declared, “We really see potential in you, young sister.” Hill conveyed that they helped her understand important ideas and introduced her to key people in terms developing her activist sentiment.

For Hill, the path leading to a committed life of activism was tortuous at first. The summer after her campus encounter at the commemorative ceremony for Malcolm X, urban uprisings racked the country. Propelled by this summer of discontent, black students waged protests during the fall semester at several campuses and Central State was among them. The following year, in the aftermath of the Orangeburg Massacre at South Carolina State College on February 8, 1968, and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination on April 4, student outrage and campus protests increased. In *The Sixties*, a scholarly journal, Ibram Rogers reported Hill’s explanation of the meaning of the era. He wrote that she said, during those years she “got as serious as the time we were living in.” Moreover, she recalled, “I never looked back on the

²⁶ With the presence of a new generation of students, Central State was a key site of the campus rebellion that conscientized a new generation of students. According to Rogers, students on several campuses from coast to coast became “more organized, more vocal, more active, more committed and more determined” in 1967 and 1968. This group included Hill. Highlighting the indirect influence of Malcolm X and the NOI, she stated Central State student government leader, Patterson, was a former lieutenant under Malcolm X in the Nation of Islam and one of her “earliest teachers.” Described as Black Muslim who was “a very radical fellow,” Patterson also surfaced alongside Amiri Baraka in philosophy professor, Leonard Harris’, political coming-of-age memories about Central State. Michael Tarif Warren went on to become an activist attorney representing Jamil Al-Amin (formerly H. Rap Brown), Tupac Shakur, members of the [New York] Central Park Five, and Million Youth March organizers. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 94; Hill, interview; Leonard Harris, interview by George Yancy in *African-American Philosophers: 17 Conversations*, edited by George Yancy (New York: Routledge, 1998), 211. Nayaba Arinde, “Atty. Evelyn Warren- A Reluctant Hero,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 11, 2008, 5.

meaningless life I had lived before. I lived a life of conviction, resistance and protest on my college campus.”²⁷

Though Hill spoke of the deaths of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. as having sparked epiphanies, she also stated she was specifically drawn into CFUN in 1970 because of a short-lived romantic tie. She first joined in an effort to impress her boyfriend, she said. Yet, Hill explained, at some point she became “more than interested” in performing the work of the organization. She became “committed both to the ideology and to the practical grassroots work that was tied to [CFUN].” Hill took a break from college to work with the movement, later earning a Bachelor’s Degree in English from Central State.²⁸

Hill stayed with CFUN and their national umbrella organization, CAP, for five years. While there, she received the name Jaribu, which meant “one who tries” or a “test.”²⁹ While a member, she also met and married Ngoma, a fellow CFUN member with whom she remained for 22 years. The couple had two children together.

Jaribu Hill’s narrative implies that she applied the energy and ethos of the Black Campus Movement to her grassroots community work. Her remembrances echoed what Ibram Rogers cited as a key outcome of the Black Campus Movement—that is the college students’ calls for “grassroots altruism” or greater ideological and tactical reconnections with their communities. For example, Hill recalled CFUN/CAP as “a family of comrades who taught me . . . shaped my values, and helped me understand what I could contribute as a young black woman coming out

²⁷ Ibram H. Rogers, “The Black Campus Movement: The Case for a New Historiography,” *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 4 no. 2: 174, accessed May 22, 014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17541328.2011.625195>.

²⁸ Woodard wrote Jaribu Hill joined CFUN “after graduating from Central State.” However, in her self-narrative, Hill reported that, like some of the other cultural-nationalist women participating in this study, she took a break from college to join the Committee in 1970. Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 133; Hill, interview.

²⁹ *Reflections of the Sun*, Amina Baraka papers, private collection.

of a crazy world, the university world, where you're taught to try to act like we're better than our people. I was taught how to use my skills and abilities for upliftment of my people." Hill emphasized her point by stating, "I haven't strayed from that since then."³⁰

Further details about the nature of Hill's belief in the importance of cultivating community connections as a college student, and the organizing skills she gained through grassroots service, can be found in her self-narrative. For instance, she recounted her CFUN activism detailing participation in a squatters' meeting at the neglected and crime-ridden Scudder Homes public housing project in Newark's predominantly-black Central Ward.³¹ Hill said she arrived at the meeting with an arrogant sense of self-importance. As such, she envisioned imparting knowledge and giving assistance to "poor people." In reality, she encountered a formidable and seasoned neighborhood organizer, "a strong sister who, in every sense of the word, was walking and talking in the image of Fannie Lou Hamer."³² Hill remembered leaving the meeting feeling humbled, but having learned much from the experience. Eventually, she said, people in the gathering began to ask her opinion. Thus, Hill expressed the value of earning acceptance from grassroots-level community members rather than boorishly assuming she was entitled to esteem simply because she had attended college.

Hill's narrative about the Scudder Homes meeting generated several impressions about cultural-nationalist women's Black Power era experiences. First, it reinforced the

³⁰ Hill, interview.

³¹ Details about Scudder Homes and residents' hope that their conditions would be ameliorated by electing the city's first African-American mayor can be found in Thomas A. Johnson, "Blacks Believe Gibson Would Help Them," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1970, 32.

³² Hill, interview.

idea that some Black Campus Movement participants left colleges and universities and enacted key ideals such as grassroots altruism through their Pan-African cultural-nationalist movement work. Second, Hill's story, which foregrounded how she learned from a local organizer and sought acceptance from community residents, reflected the way student movement activists sought "ideological and tactical reconnection" with their communities through grassroots altruism.³³ Also, by comparing the Scudder Homes community organizer with Hamer, Hill reiterated the idea that Black Power era cultural-nationalists sometimes invoked the leadership models of Civil Rights Movement era activists. The Black Power Movement was not a wholesale rejection of previous Black Freedom Struggle phases, but there was some continuity between Pan-African cultural-nationalist women's activist sensibilities and those of their forebears. Finally, by expressing that CFUN proved to be a training ground for her subsequent engagement with civil and human rights advocacy, Hill indicated such Kwaiaida-influenced organizations did not simplistically nurture men's leadership but also operated as training grounds in which women could gain transportable skills supporting political work and leadership in other areas of life. Hill stated, "once I had earned their respect, then I was able to just really blossom and develop into a better person first of all, and a pretty decent organizer." She continued, "Those skills are transferable and I use them today in my work."³⁴

³³ Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 5.

³⁴ Hill, interview.

Jaribu Hill has described herself as a “freedom singer.”³⁵ According to Black Freedom Struggle activist and scholar, Barbara Omolade, a freedom singer was an “activist-leader” of the Civil Rights or Black Power Movement whose songs delivered movement messages. Freedom singers “envisioned a new world” as they “sang and moved and led others to confront and challenge the state.”³⁶ Hill’s movement work as a performer fit Omolade’s definition. Members of the CFUN’s women’s group, the Malaika Singers, often exhorted listeners to political action and inspired pride by performing such lines such as, “We came to talk about the people, we came to organize and fight,” and, “Too busy thinking ‘bout my blackness and I ain’t got time for nothing else,” to rhythm-and-blues tunes in an effort to reach young audiences.³⁷

Specifically, Hill remembered her role singing and acting with Amiri Baraka’s Spirit House Movers and Players. The group was a traveling Black Arts repertory ensemble based in Newark’s Spirit House drama center. In 1970, when Hill joined, the Spirit House Movers was a culture and communications formation under the CFUN political organizational umbrella and the Committee, in turn, became part of the CAP united front coalition. The group performed Baraka’s politically-charged, controversial plays such as *Junkies Are Full of (SHH)* nationwide in cities from Chicago to Pittsburgh,

³⁵ Jaribu Hill, “Capitalism and Police Terror,” speech on Workers World Party YouTube Channel, October 29, 2012, accessed May 27, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pbl3U7zFV8s>.

³⁶ Barbara Omolade, “Bernice Reagon Wedding Political Action and Music,” *The Black Scholar* 16 (May/June 1985): 3.

³⁷ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

making appearances at events from Black Week to a New York Black Panther Party fundraiser.³⁸

Sometimes black student unions fostered the conditions leading women to Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations. At other times the absence of such organizations for black students drove the women to seek spaces where they could be culturally affirmed and access skills or opportunities to fulfill their desires of bringing about changes in the larger society. Having been one of few African-descended students on the Upsala College campus during the late 1960s, Azizi Powell extolled the benefits of black student organizations and mentors at predominantly-white institutions in a 1993 opinion piece titled, “Racism is Alive.”³⁹ She lamented the lack of such support systems, which went beyond academic assistance and addressed the students’ social and emotional needs, at the small, selective, conservative college she attended in the late 1960s. As a result, Powell’s story illustrated how these conditions stimulated her to join United Sisters, a subset of Black Community Defense and Development (BCD), which would later become the CFUN women’s section. Having become a “political woman” through her BCD affiliations, she graduated from college in 1969, moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and serves the local community to this day.⁴⁰

Affiliated with the Lutheran church, the Augustana religious assembly founded Upsala College in 1893. The aim of the institution was fostering social mobility and a sense of cultural

³⁸ Hill, interview; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 70, 109, 122-123; Sandra Royster, “Sandy Says,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 28, 1970, 25; “Benefit for Black Panthers,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 11, 1968, 22.

³⁹ Azizi Powell, “Racism is Alive,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 14, 1993, B-3.

⁴⁰ Douglas Martin, “Commencements: Upsala Ceremony is a Last Hurrah,” *New York Times* (Late Edition, East Coast), May 15, 1995, B5; “Black Week Program at Carlow College,” *Observer-Reporter*, February 22, 1979, B-2;

pride in a Swedish community, which grew exponentially in the context of U.S. industrialization. To serve the growing New York City population of Swedish workers, Upsala offered courses in Brooklyn during the early 1890s. In 1924, the college opened its final campus location in affluent East Orange to educate more than 100,000 Swedes residing in key areas of the Eastern states. East Orange proved a prime location to grow the student body, as it was an accessible commercial hub crisscrossed with idyllic neighborhoods of oak trees and upscale homes. A bedroom community, it was situated just outside New Jersey's largest metropolitan area, Newark, and was only fifteen miles from New York City.⁴¹

Like any other place in the world, Upsala's fate was intimately tied to its location in space and time. As with other Northern cities, East Orange's demographics dramatically changed over the course of the 1900s. At the dawn of the twentieth century, just under seven percent of East Orange's 21,506 residents were African American. The percentage of black residents swelled to almost fifty percent of the city's more than 75,000 residents by the time Powell attended in the late 1960s. The increase in the African-descended population continued for decades to follow. Also, East Orange's close proximity to chemical and auto-parts manufacturing centers made it a destination for migrating African Americans and Latinos in search of decent-paying jobs. At the same time, the aging city witnessed post-World War II suburbanization, as its commodious, old homes were carved into inexpensive multifamily units. Public housing projects grew more numerous alongside the deteriorating neighborhoods. Amenities and services

⁴¹ Kim-Eric Williams, presentation, "Augustana's Eastern Division: Upsala College," Augustana Heritage Association Gathering at Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY, June 19-22, 2008, http://augustanaheritage.org/kim_eric_williams.pdf, 4; "Upsala College and the Black Community," Black Studies Department at Upsala College Proposal, Prepared by the Black Student Unions, Spring 1969, Upsala College Records 1893-1995, Carl Fjellman Presidential Papers, Black Studies Department, Swenson Swedish Immigrant Research Center.

dissipated in the face of white flight. In a similar context as the one fueling the 1967 uprising, impoverished people fled overcrowding in neighboring Newark and settled in East Orange.⁴²

The rising campus protest movements of the late 1960s exposed the complicated irony of Upsala's original mission as compared to the changing landscape of its locale. Located in the predominantly-white first ward, the college enacted Christian values and inculcated cultural pride for the purpose of facilitating class mobility among immigrant laborers. Those it helped were, however, overwhelmingly white in the midst of a larger city that was fast becoming majority black and brown. According to a report by the college's Black Student Union, official institutional participation in East Orange and Greater Newark black communities was nonexistent until the Timothy J. Still Program was established in the summer of 1968.⁴³ Powell matriculated at Upsala during this watershed period (1965-1969). She recalled being among only a handful of black students.⁴⁴ She reflected on her college experiences in her news article.

⁴² August Meier and Rudwick Rudwick, "Early Boycotts of Segregated Schools: The East Orange, New Jersey Experience, 1899-1906," *History of Education Quarterly* 7, no.1 (Spring 1967): 22; "Stiff Code Asked for East Orange: Jersey Town Acts to Curb Blight—Stress Placed on Neighborhood Esthetics," *New York Times*, November 1, 1959, R1; Table 6 New Jersey Population by Municipality: 1930-1990, State of New Jersey, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, "1990 Census Data for New Jersey," accessed November 6, 2014, lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/census/1990/poptrd6.htm; Kim-Eric Williams, "Augustana's Eastern Division: Upsala College," 5.

⁴³ The Still Program was aimed at recruiting larger numbers of African-Americans from the surrounding areas. It particularly focused on students from lower-class backgrounds. Jefferson Wiggins, *White Cross, Black Crucifixion: Conflict on the College Campus, A Social Commentary* (New York: Exposition Press, 1970), 12-15; "Upsala College and the Black Community" proposal.

⁴⁴ Powell cited six to eight students, a number which rose to approximately sixty by 1969. Williams described Upsala as "overwhelmingly Swedish" for the first fifty years, but counters the description with the assertion that it was the first higher-education institution in New Jersey to accept women and the first Lutheran college to admit African Americans. It must be noted that the reality of passive white supremacy as normalized in the Upsala milieu was implied in Williams' essay. For example, he stated that Upsala "honored sciences in the spirit of Linnaeus." It is clear the author mentioned Linnaeus because of his notability as the "Father of Taxonomy" and Swedish heritage. However, readers were left to glean the fact that Linnaeus was the progenitor of the pseudo-scientific "Chain of Being," which theorized a classification of humankind characterizing whites as inventive and ruled by custom and blacks as phlegmatic, sly, and regulated by will. Linnaeus specifically defined black women as, "without shame." According to a report by Upsala's Black Student Union, the college was not well known, even in middle-class, African-American circles and administrators "made no recruitment efforts to service Blacks students in the community." For commentary on late-1960s Upsala as "lily white" for 75 years see Jefferson Wiggins' account of Upsala's attempt at developing the Timothy J. Still Program, which began with sixteen students. The program appeared in the aftermath of the uprisings in Newark (1967) and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination (1968).

“Going to a white college in the late 1960s was a culture shock for me,” she said. Attending an integrated New Jersey junior and senior high school did not socially prepare me for the Swedish Lutheran college I attended.”⁴⁵

For a deeper understanding of conditions which might pull a college student toward an organization focused on Pan-African cultural nationalism, it must be stressed that Powell reported having no problem performing well in an academically-rigorous environment. She cited the inherently “Eurocentric” curriculum, however, as problematic, and social interactions as a “burden.”⁴⁶ She felt fatigued from constantly guarding herself in interactions with classmates and professors. Such exchanges ranged from patronizing comments to probing questions and vague hostility. Powell also recounted facing outright attacks. She described an overall feeling of being lost in a sea of people who did not know or understand her. Her article suggested that the outsider status she held while matriculating at Upsala emanated from the pervasive sense of what Ibram Rogers described as normalized whiteness, marginality, and assumptions of black inferiority. Powell wrote that European Americans on Upsala’s campus viewed themselves as inherently superior to her.⁴⁷ She explained, “the sense of differentness” or otherness was tiring.

Wiggins was an African-American professor and director of the Still Program for recruiting these talented but economically disadvantaged black students. Powell, interview; Powell, “Racism is Alive”; “Upsala College and the Black Community” proposal; Wiggins, 13-15.

⁴⁵ Azizi Powell, email correspondence, October 26, 2014.

⁴⁶ The need for activism addressing specific cultural challenges black students faced as they attempted to matriculate through higher-education institutions is well documented; thus, stressing the importance of such culture workers as Powell, who enacted many of the ideals she fostered as a CFUN member and Upsala College student in Pittsburgh communities as a storyteller, author, and social welfare advocate. The social and cultural sense of normalized whiteness and black marginalization apparently pervaded the institution until it closed its doors in the 1990s. Some thirty years after Powell’s attendance, according to student surveys conducted for a college survival guide, “race relations [were] frequently listed as the most negative feature of their school by Upsala’s black student respondents, but most agree that the college’s academic offerings compensate for social difficulties.” Barry Beckham, *The Black Student’s Guide to Colleges*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1997), 16 and 415-417.

⁴⁷ Powell, interview; Wiggins described his campus experiences in a similar way, stating, “The dullest white person I have ever met, with few exceptions, innately prided himself on being brighter and better than the brightest black person I have ever met.” Wiggins, 20.

She wrote “differentness” was, “different upbringing causing different references, different music that I could not get into.” This sense of “differentness” or “othering” also meant being treated as the spokesperson for an entire race, and occasionally having to translate her language and ideas in ways that she did not in black communities.⁴⁸

Powell selected Upsala College and opted to stay for several reasons. First, because she was born in Atlantic City and grew up in housing projects there, her apparently well-meaning school counselor encouraged her to have experiences outside her hometown environs. Additionally, Upsala, the third-highest-ranked college in the state at the time, was prestigious and its small student body would theoretically allow for personal attention from faculty. Since East Orange was fewer than three hours away from Atlantic City by car, Powell pragmatically reasoned that she could go home some weekends.⁴⁹ Once admitted, Powell observed that, despite its close proximity to Newark and other areas with large black and brown populations, Upsala did not accept many nonwhite students. Moreover, minority students’ attrition was high. Powell expressed a longing to transfer to an HBCU where she could have African-American professors, mentors, and a social life. The possibility, however, of losing credits and scholarships kept her from leaving Upsala.

Several episodes revealed the kinds of campus social experiences Powell endured while at Upsala, and that oriented like-minded women toward Pan-African cultural nationalism, which stressed black self-determination and familyhood.⁵⁰ For instance, one student recounted lyrics

⁴⁸ Wiggins described the campus atmosphere in a similar way. He stated, “The Dean of Students, the dormitory directors, and racist students touched every aspect of the black students’ lives and easily exerted pressure in many ways to make life almost unbearable to those who were not of the favored majority. Wiggins, 13-15.

⁴⁹ Williams, “Augustana’s Eastern Division,” 5.

⁵⁰ Powell was not the only woman from Upsala to join CFUN. Woodard reported that Malaika Akiba also joined and, after the split with BCD, rose to become second only to Amina Baraka in terms of powerful women in the group. Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 122; Malaika Akiba, formerly Estelle Verner (later Verner-David),

from a school chant, which ended, “Lutfisk, lutfisk, Tack ska du har, All for Vikings.” The words amounted to a paean for Scandinavian culture.⁵¹ Remembering feelings of cultural alienation in such an environment, Powell wrote, “I believe I survived college by recharging my soul’s batteries in the nearby black communities.” Remembering one of the forces driving her to seek fellowship in black organizations and enclaves, she elaborated, “Hanging out with my black sisters and brothers from college and participating in African-American social and political organizations reinforced my self-esteem and fed my need for family. I may not have graduated otherwise.” In the article, Powell unapologetically advocated for perpetuating and creating organizations focused on supporting African-descended people’s success. In a statement signifying remembrances of Upsala’s overt practices of European cultural pride, Powell argued that people of other ethnicities did not face the same criticism as black students for developing similar programs.⁵²

Like other women in this study, Powell contemplated various options for getting involved in the Black Freedom Struggle during the 1960s. Not considering herself a full-fledged activist in high school and during her earliest college years, Powell said she was, “bookwormy,” “church going,” and too afraid to participate in the 1961 Freedom Rides.⁵³ Recalling that Martin Luther King, Jr. gave a sermon at her church, however, she remembered being motivated to join the 1963 March on Washington. Meanwhile, church doctrines seemed less attractive as she learned

shared her experiences of working behind the scenes to coordinate the 1972 Gary Convention. Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 585.

⁵¹ Williams, “Augustana’s Eastern Division,” 1.

⁵² Powell, “Racism is Alive.”

⁵³ Powell, interview.

more about other faiths in the world. She was a member of the NAACP but she said organization functioned more like a “social club” in her area. Powell’s criticism was not surprising given the personal concerns about the global nature of the freedom struggle she expressed in her self-narrative. Other members of her generation made public judgments of the NAACP under Roy Wilkins’ leadership (1955-1977), some of which appeared in the press as Powell came of age. Brash, new activists openly challenged shortcomings in the civil-rights organization’s official stance. This position included avoiding involvement in certain important political issues for young people in the 1960s, particularly those surrounding the heightening protests against the Vietnam War. Moreover, uprisings such as the one in Newark (1967) revealed that the NAACP’s focus on legislation fell short in terms addressing issues of economic and social inequality, especially within black populations in northern, metropolitan areas like those in which Powell resided. As historian Yohuru Williams pointed out, many people in the 1950s (including southern segregationists), considered the NAACP radical, but Wilkins and the larger organization had become “synonymous with the ‘establishment’ and ‘plantation politics’” to younger activists by the mid-1960s.⁵⁴

Rejecting active participation in the NAACP, searching for a sense of belonging on Upsala’s campus, and exploring opportunities to get involved in the larger struggle, Powell said she pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority, a black, Greek-letter organization. However, citing its exclusionary politics, particularly in relationship to hair texture and social class, she expressed ambivalence about having joined. She stated her decision to crop her shoulder-length

⁵⁴ Powell, interview; For a discussion of the dilemmas and criticism Roy Wilkins faced as NAACP executive director, see Yvonne Ryan, “Roy Wilkins and the Civil Rights ‘Crisis of Unity,’” *Social Policy* 44 (Spring 2014), 46-53; Yohuru Williams, “A Red, Black and Green Liberation Jumpsuit: Roy Wilkins, the Black Panthers, and the Conundrum of Black Power,” in *The Black Power Movement*, ed. Joseph, 167 and 169.

hair into a short, Afro hairstyle in 1966 or 1967 based on reasons of convenience and cost-effectiveness made being in the sorority “an oxymoron” during those years.⁵⁵ Powell’s comment reflected the reality that the AKAs had a reputation for exclusivity, although the organization had complex origins in African cultural retentions, perpetuated black self-help traditions, and had a notable record of race work within the African-American mutual-aid tradition.

Founded in 1908, the national leadership, local branches, and individual members, nevertheless, existed within the larger contexts of time, place, gender, skin-color, and class dynamics. Partially because they were among the few closed-membership organizations in the African-American community requiring a college education for entry, all such Greek-letter organizations had deeply-rooted reputations of elitism. Additionally, critiques that the sororities catered to “wealthy black women who were light-skinned enough to pass the infamous ‘brown bag test’” came from inside and outside members’ ranks.⁵⁶ It is unknown whether New Jersey AKAs would have ever fully embraced Powell. She had come to associate with cutting edge ideas in the midst of changing times. Nevertheless, from her perspective, the sorority would not be the appropriate space at that time for enacting her changing views as a young woman who wore a politically-charged, natural hairstyle and hailed from a working-class background.

African-American and American Studies scholar Deborah E. Whaley pinpointed the kind of situation Powell faced when she wrote that specific forms of agency (such as displaying racial pride by wearing natural hairstyles) could not always be exercised within the cultural, social, and political spaces of black, Greek-letter organizations.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Powell, interview.

⁵⁶ White, *Too Heavy a Load*, 158-159.

⁵⁷ Powell, interview; A cursory glance at pictures of AKAs shows women who all have straight hair styles in the mid-to late 1960s. Images of members at Trenton State College and Indiana University indicate that, by the early

A change in Azizi Powell's outlook on how she would involve herself in the Black Freedom Struggle came in the aftermath of the 1967 Newark uprising. She recalled visiting New York City for a date when the revolt broke out. Because the Newark streets were ablaze with violence, she was unable to travel through the city to return to East Orange. She decided to pass the night on her companion's couch. There, she said she met the newly-elected SNCC chairman H. Rap Brown, who also happened to be in the apartment for similar reasons.

The twenty-three-year-old Brown's incendiary rhetoric unapologetically indicted white America as the African-American community's genocidal archenemy. Brown cited such issues as Vietnam War draft policies that disproportionately placed African-American men on the front lines, birth control programs, and a skewed justice system. He had been dubbed with the slang term, "rap," because he had a way with words. Through a volley of slick gibes delivered with a Southern twang, the youthful activist stressed the need for black self-defense and pride. He literally advocated fighting white dominance with fire and meeting violence with force. Moreover, in a 1968 speech, the controversial figure would shrewdly explain his ideas about the hegemonic reach of "white-nationalism" with quips like, "Flesh-colored Band Aids, they had a

1970s however, the youthful members depicted in the photographs almost all had Afros. "Centennial Celebration 1958-1983 Photo Gallery," Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., accessed October 25, 2014, <http://aka1908.com/centennial/history/>; Noliwe Rooks, shed some light on certain African-Americans' philosophies about hair politics. Highlighting the influence of generational, class, and regional cultures, she explained that some saw natural hair as symbol of black pride and self-acceptance. Conversely, others viewed straightened hair as an important method of gaining social advantage, acceptance, navigating power dynamics, or redirecting energy toward other arenas in the struggle for black freedom and equality. Clashes over hair politics and self-representation resurfaced among AKAs decades after Powell drifted away to find other arenas of involvement. Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 4; Sam Fulwood, III, "A Tangle over Biases about Hair: When a Woman's Dreadlocks Cost Her and Invitation to her Black Sorority's Ball, Discrimination Charges Fly. For Some, the Dispute Calls to Mind Pressures for Racial Conformity," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1998, home edition, 1; Powell's father, Edward Manning, was a janitor and her mother, Leotta, was a power machine operator and active church administrator. Leotta Daisy Banfield Manning Obituary, *Press of Atlantic City*, accessed November 8, 2014, <http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/obituaries/>; Deborah Elizabeth Whaley, "The Empty Space of African American Sorority Representation," in *African American Fraternities and Sororities: The Legacy and the Vision* (2nd edition), ed. Tamara L. Brown, et al. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2014), ProQuest Ebrary edition, 439-440.

brother who put one on and thought something was wrong with his skin.” Given Powell’s description of the normalized European cultural symbolism inherent in Upsala’s campus atmosphere, it is no surprise her narrative reflected the idea that interacting with H. Rap Brown during their chance encounter forever changed the course of her life. She said she returned to East Orange the next day with her mind “expanded to the black cause.”⁵⁸

Powell’s epiphany also took place amidst the growing national Campus Movement. Specifically at Upsala during the late 1960s, an interracial group lodged petitions as well as engaged in walk-outs. Additionally, African Americans formed a student organization.⁵⁹ In spring 1968, certain professors and administrators as well as a few progressive students led the charge to recruit more African-American pupils, faculty, and staff in response to national and local occurrences. They especially demanded greater engagement with the black East Orange community. Part of the college’s response included implementing the aforementioned Still project.⁶⁰ Powell explained that one of the students arriving on campus during the program’s first year was involved with the *Simba Wachunga* (Young Lions) youth organization.

Powell, then known by her maiden name Deborah Manning, and like-minded African-American students at Upsala organized activities putting them in contact with other members of East Orange’s CFUN-affiliated group. She recalled starting a summer day camp along with her

⁵⁸ Powell, interview; It must be noted that Brown was one of various leaders within a short-lived, Black-Power organizational coalition which included the Kawaida group, Us; thus, his revolutionary-nationalist leanings would not conflict with those of a developing cultural nationalists. In other speeches, H. Rap Brown criticized cultural nationalism as a cult. Scot Brown, “The US Organization, Black Power Vanguard Politics, and the United Front Ideal: Los Angeles and Beyond,” *The Black Scholar* 31, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2001), 24; Steven Barboza, *American Jihad: Islam after Malcolm X* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 49; “Detroit Crowd Warmly Greets H. Rap Brown,” *Chicago Daily Defender* (Daily Edition), August 28, 1967, 2; Joseph, *Stokely: A Life*, 192; H. Rap Brown, “Free Huey Rally” speech, February 1968, The Pacifica Radio/UC Berkeley Social Activism Sound Recording Project: The Black Panther Party, accessed November 7, 2014, <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/rapbrown.html>.

⁵⁹ “Black Students Sign Truce; End Protests at 3 Jersey Colleges,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 13, 1969, 25.

⁶⁰ Upsala Student, David W. Rinas, in Wiggins, *White Cross Black Crucifixion*, 7.

colleagues at the college. According to a proposal she co-wrote as program director, the workshop carried the Kawaïda-influenced name, Ujimma [sic]. The Upsala Black Student Organization sponsored Ujimma during summer 1968. Organizers developed the program to bus fifty African-American children between eight and twelve years old to Upsala for half a day of recreational time and courses in reading, black culture, arts, and crafts. The goal was to help meet some of their educational and social needs as well as raise awareness about the issues they faced as urban residents. The plan for the camp called for fifteen to twenty volunteer tutors and, according to Powell, men and boys from East Orange's Black Community Development group helped with the day camp.⁶¹

Powell recounted that Amina Baraka also came to Upsala's campus with other female advocates from Newark, wanting to recruit for a women's unit. The unit started as a discussion group and study circle at Spirit House. The group, which was called United Sisters, would join the coalition eventually coalescing with the Committee for Unified Newark. Other CFUN organizations included: United Brothers, a close-knit Black Power Political organization formed after the 1967 Newark uprisings; the Spirit House; Jihad Productions, a publishing establishment; the Young Lions; and African Free School (AFS), the children's educational unit, which Amina Baraka founded and the United Sisters implemented. CFUN emerged as the broad umbrella organization encompassing all these groups during the 1968 Newark mayoral election campaign.⁶² Powell said she eagerly volunteered, stating "I was one of the first women who was

⁶¹ Powell, interview; "Proposal for Summer Program, Workshop for Progress: Ujimma, July 8 – August 16, 1968," Black Student Organization, fol. 14, Series 1 (Presidential Papers), Carl Fjellman, Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

⁶² Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 122-123; Woodard, "Message from the Grassroots," 81.

then part of the women's group for the Committee for Unified Newark . . . I know I was right there at the very beginning.”⁶³

Powell recounted her desires to be part of a group and a movement larger than herself; thus, she turned her attention to working with United Sisters when she was not attending classes and studying at Upsala. Like the male college students Woodard discussed in “Message from the Grassroots,” young Deborah Manning (Powell) came to the group, “searching for answers to burning issues of identity, purpose, and direction.”⁶⁴ She remembered helping in any way she could, particularly by assisting with the African Free School on weekends. Women, who comprised the bulk of the school's teaching staff, served the needs of families in the organization as well as the larger community through the school. While volunteering there, Powell remembered talking to various people in Newark about general Kawaïda-influenced principles and programs. Among other issues, they discussed their desires for achieving racial unity and building a stronger community for all residents.⁶⁵

Examples of weekend programs women might staff included a Children's Theater, which convened on Saturday afternoons. Women distributed flyers, made radio announcements, dropped in on local churches, and visited organizations to spread the word about the theater. The program was aimed at researching, developing, and showcasing various forms of black aesthetic expression as part of the process of engaging youth in CFUN and the broader community. Theater participants performed for various festivals, associations, and schools. Local parents could bring their children to see and hear storytelling at the *Hekalu Mwalimu* (Temple of the

⁶³ Powell, interview.

⁶⁴ Woodard, “Message from the Grassroots,” 78.

⁶⁵ Powell, interview.

Teacher), which was part of the theater group's programming as well. By 1972, African Free School also operated a "community school" program weekdays after 3:30 and a Saturday-afternoon radio show on WNJR.⁶⁶ In the midst of Newark's urban crisis, women were at the heart of the black liberation process. According to Woodard, they assisted with "unleash[ing] creative ideas and energies at the grassroots level and use[d] self-determination to redefine urban space." They helped make "a slum and a ghetto" more like "a community."⁶⁷

Working on communications projects was another important task for women. Journalism, editing, public relations, graphics and electronic media production were outlined as key areas in which they contributed to the "National liberation" process according to the "African Women Working and Studying toward Nationalism" section of the Congress of African People's organizing manual.⁶⁸ These endeavors transmitted nationalist ideology, spread relevant information, and put positive images and ideas about black identity to wide audiences. According to the manual, women were deemed essential users of communications tools to further cultural-nationalist values. Nevertheless, they were advised to approach their work in the field of mass media with their "natural role" as complements in mind. The authors cautioned women to portray the "correct image." For instance, they were instructed to present programs to

⁶⁶ "African Free School Theater," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 11, 1972, B7; One article indicates the projects CFUN women undertook were linked to national efforts to develop, historicize, showcase, and provide spaces for black aesthetic and identity formation. For instance, personalities Ellis Haizlip and Anna Horsford from the nationally-broadcast public television show *Soul!* cohosted an African Free School Children's Theater show called "African Folktales." "Nelson, Davis Go Outdoors for Public Theater," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 5, 1972, D2; Devorah Heitner, *Black Power TV* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 125; "Fusi #25" pamphlet c. 1972, Series XVII: Komozi Woodard's Office Files, 1956-1986: Committee for Unified Newark (CFUN), 1968-1970, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁶⁷ Woodard, "Message from the Grassroots," 94.

⁶⁸ "African Women Working and Studying toward Nationalism" section of Series V: Congress of African People Organizing Manual, 1972, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Atlanta, GA.

advance the cause of “National liberation” and were referred to the *Mwanamke Mwananchi* (*Nationalist Woman*) booklet to review proper protocol. In the *Nationalist Woman*, they were reminded to respect and uplift the men in their roles as heads of households and leaders for the purpose of restoring African-American families, considered the cornerstone of the black nation.⁶⁹

Parts of Powell’s self-narrative indicated enjoyment and appreciation for her time with United Sisters, especially because it was a space where she gained skills, knowledge, and habits that would forever enrich her life. She also, however, expressed disdain for the organization’s circumscribed roles for women. Her critique seemed to slowly develop during her time there, and it became sharper after she left. “If I were me now, I would not like to be in that organization the way that it was done,” Powell said. “Females were in very strict role definitions and I don’t agree with that now. But back then, I didn’t consider it because that was their role, that the woman really was supposed to be subservient to the man.” Further explaining the nuances of the organization’s masculinist stance on gender politics, she indicated she believed the positioning of men as leaders was more a strategy than a manifestation of beliefs about inherent difference. “I don’t think that was a status as much as an option . . . of position,” she said. She went on to reveal memories of small, personal acts of resistance, such as refusal to *salimu* [bow], yield a walkway, and stand aside for prominent male leadership as they passed. She also exercised agency by avoiding a wedding, which she believed represented the male advocates’ dishonesty about relationships with more than one woman at a time, or put in other words, polygamy by some other name.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Mumininas, *Mwanamke Mwananchi*, 4-8.

⁷⁰ Powell, interview; The East’s Tamisha Peterson forwarded a similar opinion about polygamy, stating “in our eyes, it was just as if you had a husband that went off and had a mistress.” Peterson, interview.

Azizi's recollections of her break with BCD and United Sisters said as much about organizational politics as they did about personal matters. At the time, she said, her love interest was BCD chairman *Balozi* Zayd Muhammad. According to her assessment, when Muhammad became involved with another woman, BCD members under his leadership insisted she could only be "Zayd's house."⁷¹ Consequently, she felt people who were once her colleagues shunned her when she tried to date other men. Additionally, the couple's break-up took place amidst a power struggle between leaders of autonomous groups coalescing under the CFUN umbrella (Amiri Baraka of Spirit House as well as Mfundishi Maasi and *Balozi* Muhammad of BCD). The conflict, which Powell remembered as a "coup," prompted an organizational split. *Imamu* Baraka took control of CFUN. Maasi pulled BCD members away from the Newark-headquartered committee and retreated to the separate operation base in East Orange. Powell recalled that, although Muhammad continued with more limited affiliations with CFUN, he was never afforded the same reverence as before the split. Because of her prior involvement with him, she believed that CFUN members' interactions with her grew icy.⁷²

Powell left the organization in 1969, partly lamenting the loss of community she experienced as an early group member and wishing Amiri Baraka had "exerted more control

⁷¹ In this case, "house" referred to a female love interest, although Azizi Powell recalled that it was used for males and females. The term "house" also referred to the patriarchal family, which was one of the main facets of the Us organization's all-encompassing way of life. This terminology likely derived from Us Organization's house system. The house or family formed the cornerstone of the nation according to Kawaida philosophy. Peterson, interview; Powell, interview; Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview; Rogers, interview; Brown, *Fighting for US*, 44; Halisi and Mtume, *The Quotable Karenga*, 20-21; See Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 24-25 for a similar remembrance of a Kawaida advocate's difficult time parting ways with CFUN; Amina Baraka expressed that she faced ostracism and even physical intimidation when she began to resist male chauvinism and eventually left the organization. She stated, "When I left [CFUN/CAP], I thought they [were] going to kill me. They acted like I had betrayed my husband and my children and everybody else." Amina Baraka, interview with author, July 13, 2012; Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

⁷² Powell, interview; For more the CFUN organizational split, see Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 121-122.

over the guys in the group so they wouldn't have treated women so badly.”⁷³ However, she might have had a different experience had she stayed longer. According to several accounts, female CFUN members would relentlessly advocate for equal partnership in their personal relationships, the organization, the broader freedom struggle, and society at large. Their stature rose in CFUN after the split. The fissures in the original umbrella group occurring in late 1968 marked the waning of an early period in the organization's development that had “farsightedly envisioned self-emancipation for men” but “shortsightedly imagined submission for women,” practices akin to those of the Us Organization during its formative years.⁷⁴

With Amina Baraka's assistance, Azizi obtained a job as notable Black Arts poet Sonia Sanchez's nanny in Pittsburgh. While in Pennsylvania, Azizi Manning looked for opportunities to continue serving the African-American community. She began presenting African tales for children in local libraries, schools, festivals, and on television programs. She credited her interest in presenting African-inspired stories (particularly via mass media and as a method of raising awareness and inculcating self-knowledge) to her CFUN experiences. She specifically recalled Amiri Baraka procured grants to support local adult training and education courses covering various topics, including communications. She remembered attending classes in Newark focused on writing methods for television and film free of charge.

Powell reasoned that experiences she had at CFUN ultimately helped her decide how to use her sociology degree. When discussing her feelings about the opportunity to gain skills by way of CFUN's training programs, she proclaimed, “I really loved it!” Moreover, her larger

⁷³ Powell, interview.

⁷⁴ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 123-124; Michael Simanga, “The Congress of African People (1970-1980): History and Memory of an Ideological Journey,” (Ph.D. diss., Union Institute and University, 2008), 68, 98-100.

narrative suggests that her short time at Black Community Development helped her find a space, tools, and skills for contributing to the Black Freedom Struggle in a personally-relevant and meaningful way. It is no surprise that Powell went on to have a television program in Pittsburgh, which bore the Kiswahili name, *Azizi*, which she received when she was affiliated with BCD. The show first aired in January 1973 and appeared on the local television schedule for almost two years. *Azizi* was a children's series featuring Powell seated in front of artistic sets depicting an idealized, bucolic African village. Telling stories that highlighted African greatness, which harkened back to her beliefs in focusing on the success of Africans in the world, she showcased her tales for children of all races. In May 1972, *Azizi the African Story Teller* earned a citation from Delta Sigma Theta sorority for social action as a woman in the field of communications ⁷⁵

5.2 Earning “Dual Degrees” in the South

Nana Anoa Nantambu (then Barbara Ann Cains) attended Louisiana State University in New Orleans (LSUNO), later called the University of New Orleans or UNO. LSUNO opened in 1958, four years after the *Brown* decision, as a “desegregated” university. African-American students, nevertheless, comprised only 3.8% of the inaugural student body.⁷⁶ Believing they were forced into integration, and viewing the process as destructive to their “Southern way of life,” some white, New Orleans residents participated in creating and maintaining demeaning

⁷⁵ Committee for Unified Newark's procurement of \$75,000 in state and federal grants for building a communications program was mentioned in Rudy Johnson, “Baraka Building Foundation for Black ‘Nation’: Bases It on Political, Economic, and Spiritual Aims,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1974, 62; “African Story Teller, Classes in Swahili at Homewood Library,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 20, 1971, 22; “On Channel 11: *Azizi* Set to Premier Sunday,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 1, 1972, 17; “Television: Wednesday thru Tuesday, August 29, 1973 – September 4, 1973,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 1, 1973, 22; “Deltas to Give Social Action Awards May 6th,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 29, 1972, 26.

⁷⁶ Congressman Cedric L. Richmond of Louisiana, Extension of Remarks on December 12, 2013, *University of New Orleans*, Cong. Rec., 113th Cong., 1st sess., 2013, 159, no. 176, E1855.

conditions meant to marginalize and debilitate black students on the campus.⁷⁷ For example, the university's privately-managed dining facility held a policy of banning black students from eating in or near the cafeteria until two years after the university opened, when the offending food-services company relinquished its lease rather than integrate. The company faced pressure to change its racially-exclusive seating policy as a result of African-American students' petitions and subsequent demands from the administration.⁷⁸ Due to a combination of black student activism, the threat of a lawsuit, and federal mandates, LSUNO's administration integrated all areas of the campus.

Notwithstanding such changes, Louisiana's state colleges remained saddled with the baggage of Jim Crow. Its two-tiered system consisted of the majority-white, better-resourced schools sitting atop a layer of under-resourced, stigmatized, predominately black colleges and universities.⁷⁹ Despite the instatement of "race-neutral" admissions policies in the late 1960s, the two-tiered structure of the state's higher education institutions generally remained unchanged, as many whites had not accepted the idea of racially-integrated schooling.⁸⁰ Though the atmosphere on campus gradually grew less overtly hostile during the 1960s and 1970s, some white LSUNO

⁷⁷ New Orleans Citizens' Council, *Don't Ever Buy a Ford Again: From the New Orleans Citizens' Council to All White Citizens*, flyer ca. 1960, The Gilder Lehrman Collection, accessed April 29, 2014, <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections/e7f6b8d1-0636-4299-a3b2-401210464621>; Richmond, *University of New Orleans*, E1855.

⁷⁸ Renee Barrow, "UNO Pioneers Racial Integration—A Look Back at a Surprising History," *Driftwood: The Community Newspaper of the University of New Orleans*, February 28, 2013, accessed April 29, 2014, <http://driftwood.uno.edu/uno-pioneers-racial-integration-a-look-back-at-a-surprising-history/>. Richmond, *University of New Orleans*, E1855.

⁷⁹ For more information about a stigmatized Louisiana predominantly black college, see Maxine Crump, interview by Pamela Dean, July 8 and 14, 1992, interview 202 A-B, transcript, Integration and the African American Experience at LSU Series, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, Louisiana State University Libraries Special Collections, Baton Rouge; Also see Samori Camara, "'There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans': The Black Power Movement in the Crescent City from 1964-1977," (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2011), 96.

⁸⁰ Scott B. Arceneaux, "Chasing the Dream: Higher Education Desegregation in Louisiana," *Tulane Law Review* 69 (April 1995): 1285-1287.

community constituents, including faculty and board members, remained resistant to African-American students' campus presence. Still others covertly or unknowingly normalized whiteness and standardized black exclusion.⁸¹

Barbara Ann Cains entered this environment as a matriculating student at LSUNO in 1966.⁸² Well into the 1960s and beyond, the black press reported the state public university system's intransigence, which allowed practices aimed at barring African Americans from white institutions.⁸³ Thus, Nantambu revealed memories pointing toward the idea that such an environment, as well as the indirect results of the Black Campus Movement meant to dismantle and reconstitute it, were elemental forces in developing her activist consciousness. Moreover, Nantambu's narrative insinuated her understanding of continued resistance to civil rights demands for integration. Her personal story also reflected a search for methods to resist nuanced manifestations of white normalcy emanating from deeply-held social and cultural beliefs.

A key Black Campus Movement aim was "denormalizing" the mask of whiteness and one important resistance method involved demanding that predominantly-white institutions hire more black faculty.⁸⁴ Like most state university systems at the time, Louisiana's particularly

⁸¹ Ibram Rogers used the terms "normalized mask of whiteness" and "standardization of exclusion" to refer to several processes. These involved activities such as excluding "African Americans from every facet of the communities at historically white colleges and universities" as well as constructing notions of objectivity, scholarly assessment, and empiricism while forwarding "white ideas, people, and scholarship" as the norm. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 4-5; Arceneaux, "Chasing the Dream," 1309; Becky Retz, "African-American Students Braved Harassment to Integrate LSUNO in 1958," *The Times Picayune* (Greater New Orleans Edition), February 17, 2012, http://www.nola.com/175years/index.ssf/2012/02/black_students_braved_harassme.html.

⁸² "Othering" is a term originally developed in post-colonial theory but later applied to such fields as black feminist studies. It can be defined as a process by which powerful groups define difference in ways that reduce "others" to characteristics seen as, nonnormative, problematic, and/or inferior. According to social analyst, Sune Qvotrup Jensen, this process affirms the legitimacy and superiority of the dominant group and shapes identity formation among the oppressed. Sune Qvotrup Jensen, "Othering, Identity Formation, and Agency," *Qualitative Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 65.

⁸³ "La. to Integrate Its State Colleges," *Chicago Daily Defender* (Big Weekend Edition), March 29, 1969, 4.

⁸⁴ Courses with content related to minority groups in the United States remained few in number through the mid-to-late 1960s. Administration noted such related problems were closely tied to the lack of faculty to teach a more

lacked quality “other-race” faculty at both predominantly-white and predominantly-black institutions.⁸⁵ Nantambu expressed studying under the guidance of a black professor was important because the instructor helped rekindle the personal literacy practices her father initially nurtured. “In college . . . I wasn't a reader until my senior year when black faculty came and I was determined to say I was taught by an African American that year,” she mused. In the future, such literacy habits would grow while she was affiliated with Ahidiana. The group’s practices extended basic student movement tenets into local neighborhoods and melded them with the *Nguzo Saba* as well as what Ahidiana founding member, Kalamu ya Salaam, termed “community issues.”⁸⁶

In a manner revealing the ideological changes in African Americans’ self-perceptions that Black Campus and Black Studies Movement sentiment nurtured, Nantambu went on to explain that, as a youth who attended majority-black New Orleans schools, teachers and administrators worked to develop students’ pride in terms of their history and culture through

cosmopolitan curriculum. They asserted the lack of minority faculty mirrored the dearth of diversity among Ph.D. holders. Specifically, the pace of producing African Americans with doctoral degrees remained exceedingly slow in the decade after *Brown v. Board* and President Harry Truman’s committee which studied minority access to higher education, Biondi, 117. At Louisiana State University, where Nantambu attended, the first African-American, Julian T. White, joined the faculty in 1971. However, it must be noted that White was an architecture professor on the Baton Rouge Campus. To date, the author has not been able to identify the earliest black faculty members of the New Orleans campus Nantambu attended, which is now designated the University of New Orleans. “LSU’s First Black Professor Dies at 73,” *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge), n.d., accessed January 11, 2015, <http://theadvocate.com/home/417530-79/lsus-first-black-professor-dies.html>; “Louisiana State Colleges Ordered to Desegregate,” *New York Times*, February 2, 1965, 27. “Negro is Enrolled in Louisiana School,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1964, 23.

⁸⁵ Arceneaux, “Chasing the Dream,” 1306.

⁸⁶ Both Kalamu ya Salaam’s narratives and Camara’s dissertation recounted how the Ahidiana patriarch, then known as Vallery Ferdinand, was a campus-movement leader at Southern University of New Orleans in 1968 and 1969. Expelled from Southern due to his activism and facing an intractable administration, Ferdinand turned his attention to community activism in local groups like BLKARTSOUTH and Ahidiana. Kalamu ya Salaam, “Hofu ni Kweni (My Fear is for You),” 1973, in *Art for Life: My Story, My Song, ChickenBones: A Journal for Literary and Artistic African-American Themes*, accessed December 12, 2014, <http://www.nathanielturner.com/artforlife10.htm>; Kalamu ya Salaam, interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, May 18, 1979, transcript, Kim Lacy Rogers Collection, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans; Camara, ““There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans,”” 109 & 183.

consistently celebrating Negro History Week. However, Nantambu recalled, the perspective on black history to which she was exposed before the Black Studies Movement did not allow for a deep understanding of Africa and the diaspora, let alone enslavement. Nantambu opined, “We didn’t even get enough information about the enslavement . . . It’s like we came out of slavery and that was kind of it.”⁸⁷ As Biondi explained, the Black Studies Movement launched a vigorous attack against “the colonial paradigm.” Moreover, as Rogers put it, activists worked to remove or denormalize “the mask of whiteness.”⁸⁸ Partly because of Nantambu’s initial exposure to the indirect results of the Campus and Black Studies Movements during her matriculation at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, she became a foot soldier at the grassroots, community-based level of the struggle by way of Ahidiana.

A local bookstore called New Afrika Books stood as one of the many interrelated institutions Ahidiana developed to address certain community issues. The store was located at North Galvez Street and Caffin Avenue in the working-class, predominantly-black Lower Ninth Ward, Nantambu described the intersection as “kind of a rough corner.”⁸⁹ Nevertheless, she expressed a burning desire to work there despite the fact that evening keeping shop alone in that

⁸⁷ Nantambu, interview.

⁸⁸ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 252; Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 5.

⁸⁹ Nantambu, interview; The Lower Ninth, occupying low-lying swampland undesirable to the affluent and powerful, became home to many of the city’s free people of color and immigrant whites during the nineteenth century. An industrial canal cut the neighborhood off from the rest of the city during the interwar years of the early 1900s. Lower Ninth residents developed a strong sense of loyalty, self-sufficiency, communalism, and an activist tradition to combat isolation and governmental neglect. The area’s black population grew over the years; however, in the aftermath of Hurricane Betsy (1965), residents witnessed growing poverty, rising crime rates, and white flight. Prior to Betsy, the Lower Ninth Ward had been a neighborhood populated by working-class strivers. Currently, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (2005), many work to return the neighborhood to its former state of desirability and promise. For more information on the Lower Ninth Ward, see Andy Horowitz, “Hurricane Betsy and the Politics of Disaster in New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward, 1965-1967,” *Journal of Southern History* 80, No. 4 (November 2014): 899 and Juliette Landphair, “‘The Forgotten People of New Orleans’: Community, Vulnerability, and the Lower Ninth Ward,” *Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (December 2007): 837-843.

particular location was dangerous, particularly for women.⁹⁰ Inferring a brand of efficient womanhood or community feminism invoked within the Kawaïda-influenced context of *kazi*, Nantambu insisted on being assigned the post. The work of the bookstore needed to be done and, since she had become a self-described “bibliophile,” the shop was the best fit for her in terms of serving the organization and the larger community. Thus, Nantambu spent many hours over several months tending the bookstore without incident.

When Ahidiana’s bookstore was quiet, Nantambu pored over eye-opening volumes lining the shelves. She devoured the information in tomes ranging from Nyerere’s *Education for Self-Reliance* to *Things Fall Apart*, a novel about the clash between European colonialism and traditional West African culture by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. She also read Woodson’s *The Miseducation of the Negro*.⁹¹ Calling the book her “Bible,” she would press it into the hands of many students. Explaining why literacy practices became pivotal to her personal development, and more specifically her activism, Nantambu said the literature to which she was exposed through her college professor, and via Ahidiana, sparked “a big awakening that our story started way before any enslavement.”⁹² Nantambu’s thoughts mirrored a common Campus Movement sentiment, and highlighted the influence of ideologies shaped through her cultural-nationalist

⁹⁰ Bookstore’s hours were listed as Sunday through Friday 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. and Saturdays 12:00 noon until 9:00 pm. “New Afrika Books,” flyer c. 1978, Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection.

⁹¹ Books sold at New Afrika covered the following topics: black poetry and literature, black music, diet and nutrition, black social relationships, socialism, child-friendly subjects, Third-World struggles, Afrikan liberation struggles, art, philosophy, black and Afrikan history, Malcolm X, education, and black religion. The store also offered periodicals, posters, and records. “New Afrika Books” flyer; “Education for Self-Reliance” was a 1968 essay written by the Tanzanian president and former teacher, Julius Nyerere. He asserted that transformational educational content and processes were needed to eradicate the psychological and political vestiges of colonialism. The essay was mentioned as important to movement activists alongside Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 11.

⁹² Nantambu, interview. Bookstores and literacy practices factor prominently in other cultural-nationalist women’s narratives. Tamisha Peterson, interview; Warren-Williams, interview.

literacy experiences. Such beliefs underscored deficiencies in standard American programs of study—that is, they were thought to inherently contain “hidden curricula” which centered the middle-class values of European-descended people, and omitted black Americans’ African heritage, defining people of African-descent as blank slates to be inscribed with European-American paradigms and values.⁹³ A key component of Nantambu’s and other cultural-nationalist women’s community activism involved helping African-Americans develop a stronger sense of history and self-awareness by presenting them with information that denormalized whiteness and centered the history, culture, politics, economies, geography, and societies of Africa and the diaspora.

In short, community activists like Nantambu viewed themselves as part of the larger process of reorienting the black masses away from the systematic miseducation Woodson discussed in his seminal book. Woodson characterized the education imposed upon African Americans as part of an institutionalized process of racial subordination. The pioneering historian theorized that the results of miseducation were woven into the social fabric of the African-American community.⁹⁴ To combat this, activists’ practices of reorientation responded to the African-descended person’s “psychological and cultural dislocation.”⁹⁵ According to Ahidiana’s literature, a reoriented person should question, investigate, and evaluate knowledge

⁹³ Andrews, “Toward a Black Radical Independent Education,” 5-14; Biondi quoting historian Robert L. Harris, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 251. One of the original Harris quotes stated, “[Eurocentric scholars] also ignored the African heritage of African Americans, characterizing them as having begun their existence in North America as *tabulae rasae*—blank slates to be imprinted with Euro-American culture.” Robert L. Harris, Jr., “The Intellectual and Institutional Development of Africana Studies,” in *The Black Studies Reader*, eds. Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley, and Claudine Michel (New York: Routledge, 2004), 18.

⁹⁴ Kamau Rashid, “Slavery of the Mind: Carter G. Woodson and Jacob H. Carruthers—Intergenerational Discourse of African Education and Social Change,” *Western Journal of Black Studies* 29 no. 1 (Spring 2005): 542.

⁹⁵ Van Deburg, *Modern Black Nationalism*, 294.

imparted by the mainstream educational process. Reorientation happened inside schools but also outside formal educational institutions. Enterprises such as black bookstores, which engaged in the process of reorientation, were expected to have a positive effect on “self-worth (salvation), family unity, education and child development, our economic well-being, and our ability to build institutions in our own image and likeness.”⁹⁶ Highlighting the specific campus/community connection in black bookstores, literacy scholar Maisha Fisher explained the shops functioned as learning spaces and constituents valued them as sites for earning “dual degrees.” The term “dual degrees” referred to the way operators, authors, speakers, patrons, and event participants valued formal education but also emphasized the important informal, alternative, or supplementary education offered at black bookstores. They were places where community members gained the opportunity to access knowledge that was devalued in, or omitted from, mainstream schooling.⁹⁷

Former Ahidiana member Vera Warren-Williams expressed similar views in her self-narrative. Her personal story highlighted the importance of channeling college campus experiences toward community development. She also noted the importance of learning spaces, particularly bookstores, as key centers for knowledge acquisition outside the hallowed halls of academia. Vera Warren entered Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) in 1976, when she was only sixteen years old. Even her choice of major in part represented the post-Campus Movement ethos of grassroots altruism. She pursued a social work degree, which she earned in 1981.⁹⁸ During her matriculation, she recalled associating with members of SUNO’s student

⁹⁶ St. Julien, *Upon the Shoulders of Elephants*, 16 and 44.

⁹⁷ Maisha T. Fisher, “‘Earning Dual Degrees’: Black Bookstores as Alternative Knowledge Spaces,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 37 (2006): 83.

⁹⁸ Rogers cited greater emphasis on educating students in such fields as social work, community organizing, and teaching in higher education in the aftermath of the Campus Movement. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 159.

government association. Though the group's plans to organize were made after the Campus Movement waned, she characterized them as "a radical group of people who were talking about taking over the administration building for our rights and also just protesting different things that were wrong at the time." Citing a key Pan-Africanist issue of concern, she stated, "Apartheid in South Africa was on the front burner of things." Warren-Williams expressed that, as a young person she found herself "aligning with individuals and organizations whose goals and mission was to enlighten our people, our community, and create a better life for our people."⁹⁹

Within about a year, Warren's association with politically-charged peers piqued her interest in Ahidiana, which was based in the Lower Ninth Ward. "I was really, really curious about that organization because it was right around the corner, literally, around the corner from where I lived. So it made it easy for me to go around and investigate," she recalled.¹⁰⁰ Initially volunteering to help wherever she was needed, Mwindaji Kweli Bentley, who she fondly referred to as "Brother Mwindaji," helped make her membership official.¹⁰¹ Overall, she explained, being a part of the Kawaïda-influenced Ahidiana organization assisted her in developing "a clearer level of consciousness" in terms aligning community work and activist struggles with an ideological underpinning developed from systematic study.¹⁰²

While still an Ahidiana member, Warren became proprietor of the literacy space and site for earning a "dual degree" called Community Book Center. She recounted having parents who were beyond the age of forty when she was born. As they became elderly and experienced

⁹⁹ Warren-Williams, interview.

¹⁰⁰ Warren-Williams, interview.

¹⁰¹ Brother Mwindaji's full name is from, St. Julien, "The Members of Ahidiana," in *Upon the Shoulders of Elephants*, where Vera Warren was also listed.

¹⁰² Warren-Williams, interview.

declining health, she left her career as a social worker to care for them. Subsequently, she turned to substitute teaching in local schools, which provided some flexibility of scheduling and brought in a little income. The itinerant nature of the job took her to various schools, where she witnessed an all too common reality. “I noticed that there were not books or other educational materials that positively reflected the African and the African-American experiences and the predominant population [in the New Orleans public schools] did not and could not see themselves and their people and their culture celebrated in a positive manner,” she said.¹⁰³

Warren-Williams decided to begin collecting her own books because, she insisted, she knew that works centering and uplifting people of African descent existed. New Orleans residents simply needed access to them. As a result of her travels to black social workers’ conferences, she brought home the books of presenters and keynote speakers. She also returned with tomes purchased from exhibitors whose display tables were filled with cultural artifacts and reading material. Throughout her self-narrative, she presented ideas stressing the primacy of learning and literacy for producing, strengthening, and spreading knowledge about the history and cultures of African and diasporic peoples. For example, Warren-Williams said she sometimes sacrificed the meager funds she set aside for food to buy books.¹⁰⁴

Warren-Williams cited memorable book purchases. Alongside *Two Thousand Seasons*, an epic tale of the Pan-African past by Ghanaian author Ayi Kwei Armah, Warren-Williams discussed *The Miseducation of the Negro* as a particularly important work, as did Nantambu.

¹⁰³ Warren-Williams, interview; During the 1980s, when Warren would have been substitute teaching in New Orleans, Louisiana’s public schools were undergoing a period of “racial resegregation.” By the 1990s, more than 90% of New Orleans public school students were black. Erica DeCuir, “Placing Social Justice at the Center of Standards-Based Reform: Race and Social Studies at McDonogh #35 Senior High, New Orleans, 1980-2000,” in *Histories of Social Studies and Race: 1865-2000*, eds. Christine Woyshner and Chara Haeussler Bohan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 159.

¹⁰⁴ Warren-Williams, interview.

Warren-Williams expressed, “Reading those just changed my thought processes.”¹⁰⁵ In an effort to share the kind of life-altering knowledge she gained through reading such works, she began to bring her special books to the various classes she was assigned to teach. Warren-Williams listed works that might have captivated students from all walks of life, from the youngest to the most mature. Included in her collection was, *Jambo Means Hello*, an award-winning children’s alphabet book by Black Power advocate and educator Muriel Feelings. The little Kiswahili primer featured the lush illustrations of the author’s husband, Black Arts Movement stalwart Tom Feelings. It is notable that Warren-Williams also highlighted the work of premiere womanist theorist, Alice Walker, by way of her Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel, *The Color Purple*.¹⁰⁶ Other Ahidiana members also spoke and wrote pointedly about women’s issues alongside discussions of race, class, and Kawaida principles. Noticing how relevant narratives featuring African-descended people engaged the students, Warren-Williams remembered, fellow educators wanted to borrow her books. “My grandmother said don’t borrow and don’t lend,” she continued, “so, I got the idea to start a book service out of my parents’ home.”¹⁰⁷ Her book

¹⁰⁵ Warren-Williams, interview.

¹⁰⁶ Susan Larson, “Essence Music Festival Staffer Vera Warren-Williams Spreads the Word about African-American Books,” *The Times-Picayune*, July 1, 2009, accessed November 17, 2014, http://www.nola.com/books/index.ssf/2009/07/shelf_life_vera_warren_william.html; Cultural-nationalist activists of the 1980s such as Vera Warren-Williams seemed to unconsciously or informally extend and enact the ideas of 1960s and 70s Black Power/Black Arts advocates such as the Feelings, whose work appealed to them. A follower of Malcolm X after he founded the OAAU, Muriel Grey Feelings became education director and volunteer coordinator of the African American Museum in Philadelphia during the early 1980s, and directed Temple University’s Community Education Program 1986-2001. In the 1960s, Black Arts Movement figure, Tom Feelings, belonged to AJAS, the same group that sponsored the Grandassa Models and which reportedly gave the artist purpose. Vernon Clark, “Muriel Feelings, 73, Writer and Educator,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 15, 2011, Newspaper Source Database; Vincent Steele, “Tom Feelings: A Black Arts Movement,” *African American Review* 32 (Spring 1998): 119-124. This part probably needs to be in the body to undergird the claim that they were the living part of black intellectualism in communities. Also, that Warren foregrounded *The Color Purple* says a lot about the fact that she was a literacy crusader during the 1980s – not the early days of the movement.

¹⁰⁷ Warren-Williams, interview.

program, which she launched in 1983 in a Lower Ninth Ward home with \$300 of her personal funds, eventually became Community Book Center.¹⁰⁸

Circulating books as a means of spreading information about black history and culture, Warren-Williams' goal was to help break down certain stereotypes and prejudices, which she believed originated from "ignorance."¹⁰⁹ First assembling racks of books at local fairs and various New Orleans-area stores, she eventually acquired her own commercial spaces. Early on, her store was in historic Tremé, the oldest black neighborhood in the United States, one of the original sites of the Black Freedom Struggle, but also an area which had become predominantly low-income and plagued by "all the negative indicators associated with such a place."¹¹⁰ In the aftermath of affluent African Americans' flight to more prestigious communities upon the post-Civil Rights Movement advent of desegregation, Tremé was left with such pressing issues as high unemployment and low educational attainment. In essence, neighborhoods like Tremé experienced a similar fate as Pittsburgh's Hill District; this might partially explain why advocates like Warren-Williams and Pennsylvania activist Tamanika Howze, who was involved in a different organization over 1,000 miles away, were similarly attracted to Kawaida-

¹⁰⁸ Community Book Center was still in operation at the time this dissertation was written. The shop is co-operated with a fellow community activist named Jennifer Hudson. Despite having its inventory decimated during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Community Books now reportedly houses an extensive collection of books by and about African-descended people. "Community Book Center Turns 30," *New Orleans Tribune*, accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.theneworleanstribune.com/main/community-book-center-turns-30/>. "Community Book Center," Media NOLA: A Project of Tulane University, accessed December 26, 2014, http://medianola.org/discover/place/827#heading_1.

¹⁰⁹ "Community Book Center."

¹¹⁰ Michael E. Crutcher, Jr., *Tremé: Race and Place in a New Orleans Neighborhood* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 1.

influenced cultural nationalism with its theories of self-determination and collectively working for the betterment of black communities.¹¹¹

Moving to a storefront fulfilled Warren-Williams' ultimate goal of running Community Books as a kind of social services "center." Her objective meshed with the Black Campus Movement ethos of "grassroots altruism" and highlighted the campus/community connection. As a college student, Warren-Williams studied at the feet of such scholar-activists as Millie Charles, a founder and dean of the SUNO School of Social Work as well as African-centered professor and practitioner Morris F. X. Jeff, Jr.¹¹² Additionally, Warren-Williams envisioned Community Books as a safe space for fostering the kinds of difficult discussions Maisha Fisher pointed out as central to the process of earning a "degree" outside the ivory tower of academia. Such a "credential" was believed to decenter the hidden curriculum of white, middle-class values while centering black history and culture.

As a young, Kawaida-influenced, Ahidiana member and community activist who apparently interwove ethics of the Black Campus and Black Studies Movements, Warren-Williams represented the "living part of black intellectualism." Moreover, she embodied the ethic that Nantambu expressed in her praise song for Carter G. Woodson. The ultimate goal of education was not solely a degree to further personal social mobility. For many cultural-nationalist women coming of age during the Black Campus Movement and in its aftermath, education meant service for the betterment of the race and all humanity.

¹¹¹ See Chapter Two for a discussion of Pittsburgh's Hill district, Tamanika Howze, and why such Kawaida tenets as *kujichagulia* (self-determination) might appeal to activists who did not witness the blooming of a "beloved community" in their locales in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement.

¹¹² Warren-Williams, interview; "Dean Millie Charles: She is Southern University's Jewel of Social Work," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 46 (Winter, 2004-2005), 53; Joshua Kirven, "Jeff, Morris F. X., Jr.," in *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), accessed January 2, 2015, doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.904; Raquel Cepeda, "Dr. Morris Jeff, Jr.: The Pan-African Connection," *Essence*, December 1997, 60.

Maturing into womanhood during the early 1980s, Warren-Williams was at the confluence of the Afrocentric intellectual currents growing from the Black Studies Movement, cultural nationalism, and the rising tide of literature and activism upholding issues of black women's equality. Embracing the title of womanist in her self-narrative, a term which Alice Walker pioneered, and also viewing herself as one of many who eschewed 1960s and 1970s feminism as white women's domain, Warren-Williams opined that black, female activists were always doing the work of feminists. Whether labeled efficient woman, womanist, or community feminist, former Ahidiana member, Vera Warren-Williams, was the female proprietor of an enterprise embodying linkages between campus and community, core Kawaia principles, and women's equality. Many would come to uphold Vera Warren-Williams as a New Orleans community pillar as Community Book Center has persisted beyond a quarter century of existence.¹¹³

5.3 *High School Awakenings*

Before blossoming at SUNO and in Ahidiana, the seed of Vera Warren-Williams' activism was sown by her family and unfurled during her high school years. Her alma mater, McDonogh #35, was founded in 1917 as the first public secondary educational institution for black students in Louisiana. Warren-Williams said that some of her classmates in the early 1970s believed their curriculum needed to include more African-American history. She opined they also called for what she termed "black consciousness" in their educational program which served

¹¹³ Ann M. Simmons, "After Katrina, a Lesson in Business, Hope," *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 2007, A18; Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 5; Info about professor and community activist Morris F. X. Jeff, Jr. can be found in Nancie Biver, *An Approach to Community University Partnerships: Discoveries on the Road to America's Promise*, (Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National Service, 2000), accessed December 29, 2014, <https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/files/legacy/filemanager/Download/NatlServFellows/biver.pdf>; Fisher, "Earning Dual Degrees," 83; Fenderson "When the Revolution Comes," 619; "Community Book Center Turns 30"; *The People Say Project: Conversations on Culture and Money*, "Vera Warren-Williams," accessed December 29, 2014, <http://www.thepeoplesayproject.org/tag/vera-warren-williams/>.

a majority-black population but focused on works by European and European-descended authors. However, she stated, many faculty members disagreed.¹¹⁴ As a result, the teens at McDonough #35 formed a black student organization, which functioned as a study group exploring the works of accomplished black authors like Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, and Gwendolyn Brooks. Off campus, Warren-Williams avidly read *The Black Panther* newspaper and attended the activities and gatherings of such groups as the local NAACP youth organization with friends. She even recalled skipping school to go to political events such as those associated with the conviction of Gary Tyler, a teenaged African American who was unjustly accused of murder and would become the youngest person on death row in the country at the time.¹¹⁵ As a result, she said classmates labeled her “militant” and “revolutionary,” descriptors Warren-Williams carried from McDonough #35 to Southern University at New Orleans, Ahidiana, and back to the

¹¹⁴ Though certain students did not, perhaps faculty deemed the McDonough #35 mission and curriculum appropriate. The conundrum of providing an education which would uplift the black community with the prospect of perpetuating a bifurcated and unequal system against demands of teaching students for the purpose of integration and assimilation was evident. The school was named after John McDonogh, the former slaveholder who willed funds for educating poor students in New Orleans, and was developed to maintain a completely segregated, two-tiered system. However, the school’s guiding philosophy was educating young black people “in academic and cultural excellence for service to their community.” Although Warren-Williams asserted the school needed more African-American history and “consciousness,” perhaps the issue was more about the literature curriculum as her list of authors suggested. Further research is needed in this area. Warren-Williams, interview; DeCuir, “Placing Social Justice at the Center,” 160-161.

¹¹⁵ Gary Tyler was a seventeen-year-old African-American from the nearby town of Destrehan who was railroaded for the death of white teen, who was in a mob that attacked Tyler’s school bus in a frenzy over desegregation. Though the evidence was clearly planted and intimidated witnesses later recanted, Tyler was convicted for the murder and sentenced to die in the electric chair. The U.S. Supreme Court subsequently ruled Louisiana’s death penalty unconstitutional; however, Tyler remains in prison. Support of Tyler’s cause was apparently a politically-charged and dangerous affair. A white male, Anthony Mart, murdered nineteen-year-old Richard Dunn as he returned home from a benefit dance for Tyler, which was held at Southern University. Mart was sentenced to life in prison but was pardoned and released after ten years. Ahidiana members organized rallies to bring attention to Tyler’s plight and to call for his freedom in an effort to “make a difference” in their community. Ahidiana members were not the only *Kawaida* advocates to agitate on Tyler’s behalf. The Us Organization’s underground entity, New African American Movement, worked with the Gary Tyler Defense Coalition during the 1970s. Bob Herbert, “Gary Tyler’s Lost Decades,” *New York Times*, February 5, 2007, A.21; “Free Gary Tyler!,” accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.freegarytyler.com/writings/isr.html>; St. Julien, *Upon the Shoulders*, 61; “Us: A History of Service, Struggle and Institution Building,” *Harambee Notes* 2.8–2.9 (August–September 1996), accessed January 19, 2014, <http://www.us-organization.org/harambee/aug96/augsep96.html>.

communities she served.¹¹⁶ According to such narratives, the impact of the Black Campus and Black Studies Movements were not solely felt at colleges and universities but in high schools as well.

According to Biondi, many college-level activists of the late 1960s gained their initial exposure to campus and Black Studies activism while attending high school, especially if they lived in large cities such as New York. In these urban hubs, black-nationalist ideologies had already been disseminated and massive protests in schools had begun to move beyond demands for integration toward community control of schools, more black history and culture in curricula, and increased numbers of black teachers.¹¹⁷ High schools were not merely portals for students bound to become protestors in college; oral histories of the women involved in this study suggested that they functioned as activist laboratories. Politicized in the process of earning a diploma, some nationalist women went directly from high school to community activism. Like college campuses, high schools were also seedbeds for broadening social and political consciousness and fostering activism.

The East's Mtamanika Beatty explained that high-school activism was one of the elements spurring her activism, which developed while attending Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn during the tumultuous era of larger global and national student movements as well as the local Ocean Hill-Brownsville strikes for community control of schools. Mtamanika Beatty (then known as Charlene) graduated in 1969.¹¹⁸ According to a *New York Times* article of the same year, Jefferson High served a predominantly-impoverished black and Hispanic population

¹¹⁶ Warren-Williams, interview.

¹¹⁷ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 16.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Jefferson High School Year Book, *Aurora*, 1969, 34, accessed September 20, 2014, <http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/Jefferson/yearbooksearch.html>.

in East New York. Most of the student body was reportedly burdened with “hunger,” “illness,” “anger,” and “shame.”¹¹⁹ Thus, during the era, the acting principal described a “general spirit of restlessness among the students.” Conditions in the community and the resulting mood fueled civil disobedience campaigns as well as individual acts of insubordination at Jefferson. The teachers, who went on strike that year, described their pupils as “arrogant and defiant.” The youths’ growing frustration must have been worsened by the fact that more than half were black, yet, merely seven of 260 staff members shared their racial and ethnic heritage.¹²⁰ Notably, the students’ Afro-American Society reportedly constructed a bulletin board calling for the appointment of Ocean-Hill Brownsville district’s black and Latin American studies director, Keith Baird, as Jefferson’s first African-American lead administrator. Although the organization did not get its choice of seasoned nationalist and Pan-Africanist leadership in Baird, the more conservative, James Boffman, joined the administrative staff in 1969 as the first black principal in the school’s 45-year history.¹²¹

Given the context, it is no wonder Beatty was oriented toward Pan-African cultural nationalism. “What made me become more aware of what was going on . . . was the Black Studies Movement,” said Beatty. Explaining that her initial exposure to Africana studies was partially due to student dissent at Jefferson, she said, “I don’t know how that happened at my

¹¹⁹ Michael Stern, “2 Schools in Brooklyn’s Slums: So Much Alike, Yet So Different,” *New York Times*, January 30, 1969, 1.

¹²⁰ Stern, 1; Pictures in *Aurora* also reflected a majority-white faculty and staff and a majority-black student body. Thomas Jefferson High School Year Book, 1969.

¹²¹ Stern, 1; Biondi noted that Keith Baird was the son of a Garveyite who taught alongside John Henrik Clarke in a Harlem, New York youth heritage program. Biondi pointed out that Baird’s lessons covered such topics as African history, diaspora culture, and the struggle for black freedom. Biondi, 17; The Afro-American Society is pictured in *Aurora* 1969, but Charlene Beatty is not listed as a member. Thomas Jefferson High School Year Book, *Aurora*, 1969, 4 and 67; Susan Heller Anderson, “James Boffman, 59, Ex-Principal and School Superintendent, Dies,” *New York Times*, November, 13, 1988, 45.

high school. . . . I think we had a course at the high school where I was. . . . I think we protested and got a course in [Africana Studies].” Telegraphing the significance of literacy practices as a movement cornerstone, Beatty emphasized course materials. Assigned reading included a groundbreaking survey text covering black history from the precolonial African past to the 1960s. The book was written to fulfill the interests of *Ebony* magazine readers increasingly intent on gaining knowledge about African Americans’ roles in U.S. history.¹²² Beatty recalled, “Lerone Bennett wrote *Before the Mayflower*. . . . That was the text that we used in that class and I think that was high school ’68, ’69. *Before the Mayflower* . . . was part of that introduction as well. It’s [part of] the African Studies Movement.”¹²³

Beatty remembered other late-1960s and early 1970s events guiding her desire to join the movement. A trip to see the Last Poets, a popular ensemble performing politicized lyrics over throbbing African-influenced rhythms and lilting jazz melodies, sparked her “cultural awakening.” She explained, “The Last Poets were talking about black pride and being conscious of who you are and what you are.” An announcement reported The Last Poets gave three performances a night at Brooklyn’s Bed-Stuy Theater on one particular September weekend in 1970. This reflected the group’s local appeal and accessibility as well as the growing popularity of such expressions of black cultural pride.¹²⁴

Additionally, Beatty cited a Black Panther Party visit to Jefferson as an event heightening her political awareness. However, it is not clear that the BPP would ever gain a foothold at

¹²² Benjamin Quarles, Review of Lerone Bennett’s “Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America, 1619-1962,” *The American Historical Review* 68 (July 1963), 1078-1079.

¹²³ Beatty, interview.

¹²⁴ Beatty, interview; Oyawole Abiodun, “Lest We Forget: The True Story of the Last Poets,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 24, 1981, 32; “Last Poets at Bed-Stuy Theatre,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 26, 1970-B, 27.

Jefferson. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Beatty became politicized, the New York Panthers were undertaking their consciousness-raising and organizing in the context of efforts to dismantle and destroy the Party. A range of entities, including the state, hotly contested Panther efforts to politicize New York high-school students. The FBI launched domestic activities aimed at detaining New York Panthers and other black revolutionaries, as well as collecting intelligence about the identities of their affiliates and supporters. It is no wonder that Beatty's narrative indicated she would not become affiliated with the Panthers, but would ultimately be drawn to Pan-African cultural nationalism and The East by way of exposure to their literacy practices. She reported avidly reading early *Black News* issues and frequenting their "edutainment" activities. She recalled affiliating with The East in late 1970 or early 1971.¹²⁵

5.4 From Queensborough to the East

Like high schools, both two-year and four-year urban public institutions were key sites of the Campus and Black Studies Movements and served as catalysts for some cultural-nationalist women's activism.¹²⁶ For example Martha Bright, who was also drawn to The East, attended Queensborough Community College "and was a dyed-in-the-wool student activist there."¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Beatty, interview; For more information on a young activist's reflections on the Last Poets as well as New York Panthers' efforts in high schools, see Joseph, *Panther Baby*, 53, 55, 63, 70, and 77; The Jefferson High Student Afro-American Society reportedly requested to host groups in which the Panthers were involved. Perhaps the BPP made contact with Jefferson students on an informal basis; however, it is unclear whether the BPP was ever actually able to officially meet at the school. Morris Kaplan, "Jewish Group Suing to Block a Panther Meeting," *New York Times*, November 19, 1970, 54; For more information on the New York Black Panther Party's suppression, see Akinyele Omowale Umoja, "Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party," in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Black Panthers and Their Legacy*, eds. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹²⁶ Biondi, 7.

¹²⁷ Bright, interview.

Having earned her associate degree from Queensborough, Bright continued her studies at City College. She recounted that, “I was [also] a student activist at City College. I was one of the people who closed down City College . . . in the spring of 1969.” Explaining the New York Campus Movement activists’ motivation to broaden the mission, character, and level of community access to the city’s colleges, Bright said, “We locked that college down for open admissions so that every high school student who graduated in New York City would be entitled to a free college education . . . City College was in the heart of Harlem but mostly white students went there. We wanted it opened up so that our community where this college was could go there and we locked that college down in the spring of 1969.” Bright noted the gravity of the protests by stating that the black and Puerto Rican protestors received support from student activists of many Campus Movement sectors, including SDS members.¹²⁸

Student activists like Bright demanded that public universities should better represent and attend to the needs of the people in their communities. For instance, students seeking higher education greatly needed access to more financial aid. As a result of the students’ activism, higher education would be transformed. Yet, the students’ victories were undercut by conservative backlash.¹²⁹ A 1999 *New York Times* article pointed out that admissions policies at the City University of New York (CUNY) senior colleges were never truly open to students

¹²⁸ Bright, interview; In spring 1969, African-American and Puerto Rican students as well as their white allies occupied City College’s south campus for two weeks in an effort to force administrators to broaden admissions policies to include more minority students. Karen W. Arenson, “Returning to City College to Revisit a 1969 Struggle: A Campus Takeover Led to Open Admissions,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1999, B3; Paul R. Simms, “What Was Behind the CCNY Takeover?: From the Five Demands to the University of Harlem,” *Harvard Crimson*, July 22, 1969, accessed October 26, 2013, www.thecrimson.com/article/1969/7/22/what-was-behind-the-ccny-takeover/; One article emphasized that black and Puerto Rican student protestors “generally rebuffed” SDS assistance. Murray Schumach, “C.C.N.Y. Shut Down after a Blockade by 150 Students: Negroes and Puerto Ricans Bar Way to 8 Buildings before Gallagher Acts,” *New York Times*, April 23, 1969, 1.

¹²⁹ Biondi, 2 & 3.

needing remediation and university trustees imposed limits on open access in the decades following the student protests. In addition to academic barriers, minority, working-class, and poor students also faced economic obstacles to entry. As Bright recalled, “City University was free before we did what we did that.” However, she lamented, “That didn’t last.” Explaining one key area of transformation she said, “After we did what we did, then tuition assistance program was created.”¹³⁰

Students protesting against City College in 1969 raised a demand, which clearly expressed “the students’ sense of obligation to use their position inside the college to affect the education of Brooklyn youth of all ages.” According to Biondi, the fifteenth demand called for required courses in Black and Puerto Rican Studies for education majors in training to become public school teachers.¹³¹ Bright was a social science major. She thought she wanted to be a Social Worker but dropped out of City College to work in the movement and completed her Bachelor’s many years later, a pattern evident in the narratives of other women such as CFUN’s Jaribu Hill. Radicalized by many elements including participation in the Campus Movement, Bright decided to focus her life’s work on educating students and community uplift through working with *Uhuru Sasa Shule*. To underscore the connections between New York City’s Black Campus Movement, Black Studies, and the Black Power push for community control of schools, it should be stressed that Bright explained the first teachers at the independent cultural-nationalist school, *Uhuru Sasa Shule* consisted of a combination of students, professional educators, and young adults. Thus, the movement persisted in local communities. The activist women who took the Pan-African cultural-nationalist road within the Black Freedom Struggle

¹³⁰ Arenson, “Returning to City College to Revisit a 1969 Struggle,” B3.

¹³¹ Biondi, 119.

were not alien but very much a product of the social forces of the times. In many ways, their work reflected a combination of ascendant activist ideologies of the era during which they came of age.

5.5 *“Just a Junior-College Student . . . Participating in the Civil Rights Movement of the Day”*¹³²

Many consider the San Francisco State College uprising the most significant event of the Black Campus Movement because of its intensity, scale, and impact; however, Amina Thomas joined the struggle while enrolled at different California college, one which proved important to the formation of the Us Organization. As Us historian Scot Brown has pointed out, Thomas was part of a stream of students from Pasadena City College (PCC) who joined the organization during the latter half of the 1960s.¹³³ Amina Thomas remembered having been politically active on and off campus around the time she joined Us, stating, “I was just a junior-college student . . . participating in the Civil Rights Movement of the day.”¹³⁴

Indicating that her eventual cultural-nationalist activities fell on a continuum with other forms of resistance, she said that she and her colleagues protested. Providing more details, Thomas recalled, “In Pasadena, they had a Tournament of Roses Association [which] had the Rose Parade every year and prior to that time, they didn’t have any blacks on the Rose Queen

¹³² Thomas, interview.

¹³³ Other listed students were George Subira, Joann Richardson-Kicheko, Buddy Rose-Aminifu, and Clyde Daniels-Halisi. Brown, *Fighting for US*, 42. Naima Olugbala Pasadena resident additionally described her city (and the local community college) as a “hub” of political activity in her interview with the author. Naima Olugbala, telephone interview by author, July 1, 2013.

¹³⁴ Thomas, interview.

court.¹³⁵ We protested that kind of stuff. . . . We were actively engaged in a lot of different struggles at the time.”¹³⁶ It is notable Thomas foregrounded a gendered protest against racism, which opposed normalized whiteness and the standardized exclusion of black girls in a spectacle flaunting an academically-sound, beautiful, and poised high school student of good character as a representation of Southern California and its many benefits. Thomas’ narrative, therefore, suggested that self-representation was key site of struggle for female cultural-nationalist activists. Such concerns partially emanated from their activism as students on and off campus. Cultural-nationalist women focusing on specific areas of black subjugation sought organizations within the movement that tackled such issues.

Thomas expressed concern for black community uplift as a young person. She recalled a colleague, Clyde Daniels-Halisi, with whom she was working on civil rights issues through a campus committee, brought her attention to a new organization. According to Thomas, Halisi noted that group members placed more emphasis on black culture and pride than others. Thomas, Halisi, and Buddy Rose-Aminifu, a fellow PCC classmate, would join the organization, which

¹³⁵ *The Los Angeles Times* reported the Tournament of Roses Association had a long history of excluding, marginalizing, and objectifying people of color as well as circumscribing female’s roles in its parades. In particular, a *Times* opinion piece critiqued parade organizers for what can be seen as racialized sexism by claiming black people had always been included in such groups as marching bands while ignoring the standard of excluding nonwhite female queens and attendants. Further the article’s author indicated that, in the 1960s, the NAACP threatened to organize thousands of protestors if the Tournament of Roses Association did not open its selection process to nonwhite queens and courtiers. Females of color initially appeared in the Rose Queen’s court in 1969. Pictures reflect an early black member of the Royal Court, Traci Lynn Stevens, appearing alongside other attendants including one Hispanic woman named Victoria Sanchez in 1972. Like the women who grew in cultural-nationalist sentiment through their late 1960s activism and physically represented their defiant race consciousness through soul style, the brown-skinned Stevens wore an Afro. Not until more than a decade later did an African American embody the lead position as court regent. Kristina Smith was crowned the 68th Rose Bowl Queen in 1984. Patt Morrison, “The Rose Parade Grows Up: Pasadena’s Big Street Party is Finally Rolling into the 21st Century,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 10, 2013, A17; Collections, Pasadena City College Shatford Library, Pasadena Digital History Collaboration, “Tournament of Roses Court Holding Bouquets in Front of Fireplace,” 1972, accessed May 1, 2013, <http://collection.pasadenadigitalhistory.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16237coll6/id/97/rec/1>; “Smith Maintains Crown as 1st Black Rose Bowl Queen,” *Jet*, November 12, 1984, 51.

¹³⁶ Thomas, interview.

was called Us. Amina Thomas and Aminifu eventually became a couple and had children together.¹³⁷

Thomas narrated a life story indicating the path to her activism as a Pan-African cultural nationalist in the Us Organization was intertwined with the Campus and Black Studies Movements. She remembered that after leaving Pasadena City, she went to Long Beach State College in 1967, where she was among students supporting the formation of a black student association and lobbying for the Black Studies Department, which was founded in 1971. At Long Beach, Thomas recalls becoming an active Us Organization advocate. She was attracted to the group's doctrine, members, and leadership because she believed they worked to make the black community better and Kawaida seemed to "have an explanation for everything in life."¹³⁸ Devoting many daytime hours to learning organizational doctrine, teaching newer members, and representing Us in other community groups, Amina Thomas changed her major from art to Black Studies to take advantage of the university program's evening course offerings; however, she would never formally complete a degree inside walls of the academy.¹³⁹ Amina Thomas' recollections of being a woman in the early Us Organization were not fond, but pointed toward the realities of the second-class status women occupied during the early years of Us, the seminal Kawaida-based organization.

¹³⁷ Thomas, interview; Brown noted that Clyde Daniels-Halisi was one of the Pasadena Community College Black Student Union founders. Brown, *Fighting for US*, 42.

¹³⁸ Thomas, interview; Long Beach State is now California State University, Long Beach. There, Maulana Karenga has served in various capacities, as African Studies lecturer, professor, and department chair, intermittently since 1979. California State University, Long Beach, CSULB Historical Site, "CSULB History," accessed May 3, 2014, <http://www.csulb.edu/about/history/>; Maulana Karenga, interview by Elston Carr, transcript, Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles (2002).

¹³⁹ Thomas, interview.

Although the self-narratives collected for this study showed women in different Kwaaida-influenced organizations had varying experiences over space and time, important sparks igniting their passion for cultural-nationalist work often originated in the Black Campus and Black Studies Movements. From high-school, two-year, and four-year, college-level campuses in both the North and South, the women extended goals and tactics of these movements in their community-based activism. Through their work in Kwaaida-inflected organizations, many embodied the key ideal of grassroots altruism and enacted other movement tenets such as standardizing the inclusion of African-centered paradigms and African-descended peoples in the educational process as well as exposing and denormalizing hidden curricula of white, middle-class values. Inherently, such public spirit, which was generated from the bottom up, meant local communities shaped the women in many ways, particularly in their perceptions about the purpose of the very education they sought. Through their work as cultural-nationalists, they exhibited a deep belief that education did not merely mean earning a degree. It meant how they served their race and all humanity. Over the more than two decades that they were active in Kwaaida-based organizations, many also came to understand that serving all humanity meant women's issues must be central to their struggles.

6 “AGITATE. EDUCATE. ORGANIZE.”: WOMEN IN KWAIDA-INFLUENCED NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS, THE PRESS, AND PROTEST POLITICS¹

One late summer afternoon in 1975, young people in bright T-shirts clapped to the music of drums, filling the sidewalk with rhythmic movement and sound. Dressed in vivid, African-inspired outfits, women kept an eye on the children while men congregated in front of a

¹ *Black News* slogan.

bookstore with their reading materials. Situated on Claver Place just off the main commercial thoroughfare, Franklin Avenue, shops offered goods ranging from clothes to fresh food and herbs. A newly-renovated, two-story cultural and education center overlooked the activity on the street. Such was the description of everyday life on the north-central Brooklyn block The East organization occupied, according to a *New York Times* article. In the piece, the author declared Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn could be proud of The East's neighborhood enterprises.² The organization modeled perspectives of *ujamaa*, from "familyhood" to "cooperative economics," in the midst of a neighborhood outsiders viewed as a ghetto. When so many educated, hardworking African Americans left rough areas like Bed-Stuy for better neighborhoods, East women stayed, performing *kazi* via essential institutional and community work.³

Afflicted by the most serious problems of urban America, the environment in much of Bed-Stuy during the 1960s and 1970s contrasted the previously-mentioned scene. Having undergone post-World War II white flight, the area's ethnic and racial composition stood in stark contrast to its population during the first half of the century. More than 250,000 residents populated post-war Bed-Stuy. Eighty-four percent were black, 12 % were brown, and 4 % were white or "other." Over time, grim iron grills covered windows and doors that had once been bright and open. Deteriorating, burned-out, and scarred buildings were boarded up. The empty

² Mary H. Manoni, *Bedford-Stuyvesant: The Anatomy of a Central City Community* (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1973), 2; Monica Surfarò, "The East, a Black Culture and Education Center, Brings Bit of Africa to Brooklyn," *New York Times*, August 17, 1975, 87.

³ The reference to outsiders' impressions of Bedford Stuyvesant as "the ghetto" is from Devorah Heitner, "The Good Side of the Ghetto: Visualizing Black Brooklyn: 1968-1971," *The Velvet Light Trap* 62 (Fall 2008): 48; Manoni also wrote during the early 1970s that Bed-Stuy was called "the largest black ghetto in the country." Manoni, *Bedford-Stuyvesant*, 2; By 1980, singer Billy Joel, in his song "You Might Be Right," would juxtapose "Bedford-Stuy" with a "combat zone," emphasizing both as particularly dangerous places to be. Trymaine Lee, "Fulton Street Journal: A Merchant Watches as Bed-Stuy Gentrifies," *The New York Times*, May 9, 2009, A15; See Manoni, *Bedford-Stuyvesant*, 12-14 for information on African Americans able to leave but choosing to stay in the neighborhood.

crumbling shells were left to frame the area's vacant lots and crime-ravaged streets. Juvenile delinquency was high and drug addiction plagued the community. Heroin dependency grew over the course of the 1970s and by the 1980s, crack cocaine devastated Bed-Stuy families. Eighty-five percent of neighborhood residents worked irregularly or part time. Most toiled as unskilled laborers or in low-level service jobs from 1969 until 1970. More than 50% of families made under \$5000, less than half of the acceptable standard of living for New York City.⁴

This chapter provides snapshots of women who joined the movement due to concerns over such issues in their communities or through neighborhood activism. Focusing on work they performed, causes they supported, and tasks such as their work with independent circular *Black News*, I theorize that a confluence of forces, including the concept of *kazi*, drove the way they navigated restrictive gender ideologies. Some women began movement work because of the desire to take responsibility for their communities, which were in the midst of urban crises but others eventually challenged gender-based restrictions while including women's rights issues. In the process, these women became leaders in their own right.

Mary Manoni, author of a 1973 study about Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, defined "community" as "a group of people who come together to live in a particular area because they have something in common."⁵ Perhaps because the author included no local Pan-Africanists and few black nationalists in her study, Manoni's definition of community overlooked cultural-nationalist conceptions of communities bound by commonalities of race, history, interests, goals, and fate but not necessarily physical proximity. Women in groups such as CAP Pittsburgh and

⁴ Manoni, *Bedford-Stuyvesant*, 12 & 26-27; Lee, "Fulton Street Journal," A15.

⁵ Manoni, *Bedford-Stuyvesant*, 10.

The East tended to define community in both local geographical terms and the broader ideological sense as well.

6.1 “A Place Called Bed-Stuy: ‘Why Would Anyone Want to Live There?’”⁶

With a rising population of politically underrepresented and systemically marginalized residents, Bed-Stuy became one of the country’s largest, most severely crime-ridden and poverty-stricken neighborhoods in the aftermath of World War II.⁷ Yet, the area had bright facets and according to many accounts, The East was one of them. During an era when upwardly-mobile, African-American professionals composed a minority of the neighborhood’s population and most educated residents pulled up stakes to move elsewhere, East advocates lived and worked there, agitating, educating, and organizing to assist with the process of making Bed-Stuy a better place.⁸

During a period when feelings of frustration and powerlessness gripped many in the neighborhood, The East “emerged as a galvanizing endeavor that would allow control over school curriculum (*Uhuru Sasa*, the school associated with The East, offered an Afro-centric program), control over businesses, as well as the nurturing of pride and self-respect in pursuit of a community project,” according to music historian, Jeffery Taylor. Further, Taylor emphasized

⁶ Manoni, *Bedford-Stuyvesant*, 1.

⁷ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 7-8.

⁸ Manoni, *Bedford-Stuyvesant*, 7, 13, 26-28; “Bed-Stuy is Looking Better These Days,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 11, 1980, 36; “Storm over Teen Halfway House,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 13, 1979, B1; Joseph P. Fried, “Bedford-Stuyvesant Has Bright Side, Too: Neat Blocks of Houses Attest to ‘Other’ Bedford-Stuyvesant,” *New York Times*, February 1, 1969, 31; Parents of Young Offenders Meet and Ask, ‘What Went Wrong?’, *New York Times*, February 25, 1975, 40.

that The East truly was a community project.⁹ By many accounts, local women played key roles in developing and maintaining East endeavors, which served the majority-black, poor and working-class neighborhood of Bedford Stuyvesant. According to a *Black News* article, women in The East Organization, particularly those in The East Sisterhood, played “a vital role in the organization’s day to day operations,” including “the Uhuru Sasa School, a bookstore[,] a clothing store, a cooperative food buying service, and the newspaper ‘Black News’ which feature[d] ‘Fundisha’ the official voice of the Congress of Afrikan People.”¹⁰

Advocates like Tamisha Peterson remembered the work she and fellow East sisters performed in the Bed-Stuy community as one of the most satisfying aspects of her time in the organization.¹¹ Tamisha [Wendie Anderson Richardson] Peterson was born and reared in Brooklyn. A part of her story revealed a slice of life on her Garveyite grandparents’ West-Indian street and her parents’ African-American block in a “bright” part of the borough as a youth.¹² Peterson recalled, “My grandparents lived in a house that was in a neighborhood that had brownstones in it.” As her narrative unfolded, her words sketched pictures of a childhood spent on sidewalks populated by faces much like her own. Rows of multi-level, ornately-embellished brownstone homes lined the streets where she lived. She continued with her story, illustrating her ethnically-diverse but racially homogeneous community. “On this block there was nothing but islanders. Not even just black [people], but black [people] from the islands, all black and several

⁹ Jeffery Taylor, “‘Live from the East’: Pharoah Sanders in Brooklyn” *American Music Review* XLII, no. 2 (Spring 2013), accessed October 17, 2015, <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/academics/centers/hitchcock/publications/amr/v42-2/taylor.php>.

¹⁰ “Afrikan Women Unite,” *Black News* 2 no. 16 (April 1974): 11.

¹¹ Peterson, interview.

¹² Fried, “Bedford-Stuyvesant Has Bright Side, Too.”

neighborhoods and then in my neighborhood were just plain, regular black folks from . . . the north, born and raised there.” Describing a similar kind of white flight as the forms Newark and Pittsburgh residents experienced, Peterson explained, “It had been a Jewish community, but once blacks started moving in, [Jewish people] started moving out.”¹³

Considered as a whole, the women’s narratives did not reflect the typical tale of a triumphant Civil Rights Movement facilitating African Americans’ escape from the social and economic margins in racially-segregated communities for better-resourced, integrated environs; however, Pan-African cultural-nationalist women’s narratives are part of a larger story of increasingly ghettoized, stigmatized, and impoverished neighborhoods during a period in which the rising tide of Civil Rights Movement gains was supposed to lift all boats. Within this context, women included in this study expressed feelings of alienation from mainstream society and a rejection of integration as a panacea for black liberation. For instance, Peterson stated, “Integration, I didn’t too much relate to.” She also said, “I didn’t feel that their organizations were any better than ours. . . . We can do just fine, thank you very much.”¹⁴ Thus, the women’s

¹³ Peterson, interview; Nearby Brooklyn industries employing workers without much formal training or skill attracted Italian, German, Irish, and Jewish immigrants as well as a “trickle” of African-descended in-migrants during WWI. During WWII black families flooded into the area in search of economic opportunity. Eventually, after WWII, many young European-Americans moved away from the community. Manoni, *Beford-Stuyvesant*, 3; A slice of racially-integrated WWII-era Brooklyn can be seen in Peterson’s parents’ 1940 census data. The paternal Anderson side of the family lived in an area where three of four people were native-born African Americans from either the North or South; however, at least two white families and their boarders made up the balance of the reported population. The majority of residents listed as white hailed from Germany. Peterson’s mother, Iona Ashby lived with her British West Indian parents on a majority African-American block. The census taker noted that one white American family, the Gahans, also lived on the block. United States Census, 1940," index and images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KQ9B-L92> : accessed 23 April 2015), Aeolus Anderson in household of Katie Anderson, Assembly District 18, Brooklyn, New York City, Kings, New York, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 24-2052A, sheet 3B, family 47, NARA digital publication T627 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012), roll 2599; "United States Census, 1940," index and images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K3YW-366> : accessed 23 April 2015), Iona Ashby in household of Oliver Ashby, Assembly District 5, Brooklyn, New York City, Kings, New York, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 24-682, sheet 10A, family 196, NARA digital publication T627 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012), roll 2563.

¹⁴ Peterson, interview.

stories revealed the do-for-self tendencies of the *kazi* ethos. Rather than continuing to wait on the painfully slow-moving promise of equality to reach their communities or fleeing their familiar neighborhoods as part of a black middle-class exodus, the women worked toward gaining control of their embattled communities, redefining spaces and creating strong institutions within them. They also refashioned their own identities—no longer were they “Negro women,” or even “black.” Rather they were Afrikan women who actively replaced the American dream with Pan-Africanist freedom dreams.

Peterson completed her secondary education at the local Erasmus Hall High and lived in Brooklyn except for about two years, which she spent in Puerto Rico with her mother, Iona Anderson. Anderson went there as part of a teachers’ exchange program. After Peterson returned to her hometown, she took classes at City College until she married Fred Richardson, with whom she had one child. It was during this period that Peterson also joined the movement. As discussed in Chapter Three, she recalled affiliating with the Black Panthers, but ultimately she joined The East after selling the Richardson family’s Brooklyn bookstore. Peterson’s contributions assisted The East with founding their Akiba Mkuu shop in 1970. She sold the bookstore and donated its inventory and furnishings because her husband had gone underground, disappearing in the midst of the Panther 21 ordeal.¹⁵

¹⁵ Peterson, interview; The history of Akiba Mkuu bookstore as well as the nature of its existence as an East effort to engage the community from a nationalist perspective is discussed in Konadu, *A View from the East*, 74-75; Akiba Mkuu was also covered in the *Amsterdam News*. The author of the article explained the bookstore’s manager, Akin [Hakim] Bomani, claimed that women interested in “feminism, poetry, mysticism, and children’s literature” comprised the largest group of consumers patronizing the store. Dawad Wayne Philip, “Is the Black Bookstore an Endangered Species?: Prospects for Black Literature Appear Bleak,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 8, 1977, B2; As cited in Chapter 3 the Panther 21 ordeal refers to several Black Panthers, who were arrested and charged for conspiracy to bomb five Manhattan department stores, sections of the New Haven commuter railroad, the Bronx Botanical Gardens, carrying dangerous weapons, and plotting to attack several police precincts. Fred Richardson, Peterson’s husband at the time, was the twenty-second defendant in the trial. *The Black Panther*, April 27, 1969. 5; Asbury, “16 Black Panthers Go on Trial,” 55; “Panther 21 Trial Opens in New York.”

Attracted to the group's familial character, Peterson defined The East as a "neighborhood organization." She explained, "If things affected them, that would affect us."¹⁶ East leader Jitu Weusi's "Around Our Way" articles in *Black News* provided a window into the community issues concerning The East. They ranged from interests in police brutality and children's literacy to concerns over local politics and questions about the perpetrators of neighborhood homicides.¹⁷ For example, East members agitated about community issues like unjustly accused and imprisoned African Americans. Peterson explained that if brothers in the community were imprisoned, East family members would raise awareness of their plights and help bail them out.¹⁸ Moreover, Konadu explained that the *Uhuru Sasa Shule* was the group's main feature and it fostered a sense of collective identity for constituents.¹⁹

Peterson's narrative reflected the fact that community work was often organized around gender. An aspect of East labor patterns involved activities typical of women's "proper" roles, which were thought to begin "at home amongst the family" and focused on "inspiring the man to build" and "inspiring the children to grow."²⁰ Women's "appropriate" roles were circumscribed

¹⁶ Peterson, interview; Konadu defined the East as a "family-based community institution" explaining that the organization emanated from and centered on intimate and familial relationships. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 56.

¹⁷ Kasisi Jitu Weusi, "Around Our Way," *Black News*, December 26, 1973, 12-13; Konadu outlined the areas *Black News* covered and analyzed, including local, national, and international news pertaining to the Pan-African world, important political and educational concerns, information for African-descended individuals detained in prisons, and more.

¹⁸ *Black News* ran a regular column titled "P.O.W.'s Forum" dedicated to awareness- and fund raising for imprisoned individuals of African descent; Also see, "The Three Homes are Saved," *Black News*, 1, no. 36 (December 1971), 16 for commentary on how readers assisted a couple on the verge of losing houses they used as collateral for political prisoners who did not report for imprisonment; *Black News* also ran articles and posted commentary about organizing the black community "to end the attacks on African Americans and Latinos." Basir Mchawi, "Victor Rhodes – Another Case of Injustice" and Jitu Weusi, "Why Was Arthur Miller Murdered," *Black News*, 3, Special Edition (c. Fall 1978), 2.

¹⁹ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 56.

²⁰ The entire quote, which apparently came from a participant in the East Sisterhood seminar titled "Organizing the Black Family," read "Our experience – we repeat – taught us that we must organize ourselves and struggle within a movement, that is, our women's organization must be an arm, an instrument of a political movement . . . and women

within *Kawaida*-influenced organizations during the pre-1975 years. Many of the female family members' work revolved around domesticity and engaged such public concerns as education and social development. The gender roles were also complex in The East, however. According to Konadu, most women involved in his study said they were never entirely subservient, nor were they patently silenced; however, he reported, some found they were suppressed in individual relationships, a reality that they often faced both inside and outside the organization.

Additionally, some women desired relative sanctuary from the vagaries of the public sphere and sought out forms of reverence and honor associated with femininity. The protections assigned to "ladies" within such gender norms were often denied to black women in the broader society because of their race. While some might have embraced these roles due to "the promise of protection," others often viewed adherence to strictly-defined roles for females as a form of *kazi*, or work and sacrifice in service of struggle.²¹ Konadu opined that East advocates never sufficiently theorized gender in the contexts of the organization and the larger freedom struggle to ensure that roles for both women and men were equitable, clear, and consistent with the group's mission.²² That is to say, women in The East were not completely oppressed; however,

must understand that her [sic] role of mobilisation [sic] starts first of all at home amongst the family." [ellipses in the original] Kasisi Jitu Weusi, "Around Our Way," *Black News*, 2 no. 18 (June 1974): 12; "Mwanamke Weusi (Black Woman)," *Black News*, 2 no. 14 (February 1974): n.p.; As an example of women's roles as limited to the area of "social organization," see CAP's Executive Committee in 1973. All members except Bibi Amina Baraka were male. Amina Baraka served as social organization minister. *Fundisha*, 1 no. 6 in *Black News*, 2 no. 11 (December 11, 1973): 10.

²¹ The term "promise of protection" is from Griffin, "'Ironies of the Saint.'"; Rickford also mentioned the women's view of labor and personal sacrifice in service of struggle, citing it as borderline "self-abnegation" in *We are An African People*, 154.

²² Konadu, *A View from the East*, 56-57; Akili Walker recalled a similar reality in his reflections about attending Committee for a Unified NewArk's brotherhood meetings. In discussing his observations of extended families, he expressed that such relationships were not standard policy; however, he remembered that a minority of advocates unofficially upheld the practice of one man having multiple female partners based on the fact that polygyny was acceptable in "African culture." Thus, he expressed that there was no official policy normalizing polygyny in The East, nor were extended families expressly discouraged. There were no clear and enforced sanctions for engaging polygynous-type relationships according to Walker's recollections. Walker, interview.

gender inequity was neither adequately addressed within the organization nor the broader Pan-African cultural-nationalist movement, which was directed at bringing about freedom for the entire community. Women navigated these realities and it must be noted that they actively sought to express themselves and shape the direction of *Kawaida*-influenced organizations such as The East.

6.2 “It Was a Family Kind of Organization”²³

Many of the women interviewed for this dissertation were drawn to *ujamaa* in the sense that it meant The East operated partially as an “extended family” with several biological kinship groups at its core. The East was a popular cultural-educational institution consisting of approximately 100 people affiliated with multiple organizations. The idea that the organization was more like a family than a group of affiliated institutions recurred in several narrators’ recollections.²⁴ Safiya Bandele, a self-described “peripheral” East advocate, liked that the camaraderie she experienced within the group resembled her large, southern family.²⁵ Shukuru Sanders expressed that such a structure was “something even higher or better than an organization.” She continued, “We transformed from The East Organization to The East family and to me that changed how we related to each other.”²⁶

²³ Beatty, interview.

²⁴ The estimate of 100 East family members came from Bright, interview, part 1 of 2; East operations were outlined in Konadu, *A View from the East*, 157-160; Shukuru Sanders described the organization as a family and Angela Weusi explained “there were quite a few large families” and many children in The East in Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 11 & 12, 2014.

²⁵ Safiya Bandele, telephone interview with author, August 22, 2013; East founding member, Adeyemi Bandele, also stated that Safiya Bandele was a peripheral East member. Adeyemi Bandele, telephone interview with author, July 25, 2013.

²⁶ Sanders, interview.

Certain narrators expounded on the ways East family members related to each other. Mtamanika Beatty stated that adult East advocates referred to each other by the endearing terms, “sister and brother.”²⁷ Bright said, “A lot of us formed our families right in The East.”²⁸ A part of The East brotherhood, Segun Shabaka echoed Bright’s sentiments by explaining that The East was comprised of “men and women mainly coming together as families.” Describing an organization that seemingly embodied the proverb, “It takes a whole village to raise a child,” Shabaka explained, “All the children would first know [adults] as mama, baba, mother, father and commune together in each other’s houses. . . . So, it wasn’t like most other organizations, I think, who were maybe adult individuals.”²⁹ The East family created a space for affirming that “black lives matter,” as they nurtured youth who faced the harsh realities of marginalization, poverty, crime, and neglect in a white-supremacist society.³⁰ Beyond The East’s core family groups, the organization was open to all interested Bed-Stuy community members; thus, their

²⁷ Beatty, interview.

²⁸ Weusi et al., interview, October 12, 2014.

²⁹ Shabaka, interview; In his recollections, Adeyemi Bandele stressed that the East, “helped to create a village for the raising of my children.” Adeyemi Bandele, interview.

³⁰ Former Organization Us chairperson, Subira Kifano, highlighted the idea of a common philosophy permeating independent black institutions beginning in the 1970s. She asserted that the unifying thread was the introduction of an African-centered curriculum in terms of values, views, and lifestyle as part of a commitment to validating the “personal and collective human worth and potential of African-American people, in general, and children specifically.” This author acknowledges that, in short, Kifano’s assertion reflects the slogan, “black lives matter.” Alicia Garza originated the term, “Black lives matter,” shortly after George Zimmerman’s July 2013 acquittal for the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012. Fellow organizers, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, publicized the slogan, which was turned into a hashtag and used to organize online demonstrations. The protests have grown beyond social media, as activists have taken to the streets, picketing, engaging in acts of civil disobedience, and forming several local Black Lives Matter chapters in the United States, Canada, and Ghana. Subira Kifano, “Promise and Possibilities in the Education of African-American Children as Exemplified in The Mary McLeod Bethune Institute, An Afro-centric Supplementary School,” PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University, 2010, 44; *Michel Martin Going There*, “The #BlackLivesMatterMovement: Marches and Tweets for Healing,” *NPR: Public Broadcasting Atlanta*, June 9, 2015, accessed November 13, 2015, <http://www.npr.org>; Black Lives Matter; “All #BlackLivesMatter. This is Not a Moment, But a Movement,” accessed June 23, 2015, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

communal approach to parenting in a neighborhood with such high instances of juvenile delinquency was in and of itself an act of resistance.³¹

East family members ate communally on Sundays to foster a sense of togetherness. Providing details about activities The East family would regularly host, Mtamanika Betty commented, “It was a good time. . . . We would have the *karamus*, the feast, together and everybody brought dishes and we would eat together and the children would be together.”³² Tamisha Peterson also remembered, “Sundays [were] a time they wanted for us to come together and be family.” “We’d have different family things and we’d just eat together and enjoy each other,” Peterson recalled. Such acts translated ideas about *ujamaa* into action, Peterson explained. “Since we talked about family,” she said, East members had to “promote family.”³³ The concept of family as enacted in The East was not without its problems, particularly as related to polygamous-type relationships. Its strength, however, was in the fact that East family members participated in the act of creating a space for marginalized African-descended people to be part of loving, supportive, and affirming relationships in a community suffering from the worst effects of urban blight and decay.

³¹ Bedford-Stuyvesant’s rates of juvenile delinquency among those aged seven to twenty were higher than both Brooklyn and New York City’s averages at 116 of every 1,000 residents. Manoni, *Bedford Stuyvesant*, 22; Jitu Weusi asserted the particular importance of providing a space to “educate and redirect” the community’s youth. He wrote anecdotally that he stood outside a local department store observing “a virtual army of poor Black and Hispanic youth (males and females) whose only purpose is to steal whatever they can get their hands on.” Further, he wrote that he, “watched as a police car made trip after trip carting recently arrested youngsters off to jail.” “Is this what we can expect from our future leaders and citizens?” he questioned, emphasizing the humanity of the young people rather than focusing on criminalizing them in his discourse. It is no wonder elements of East programs reflected that the involved associates, male and female, worked to provide a structured, nurturing environment for interested youth in the Bed-Stuy community. Jitu Weusi, “The Re-Emergence of B’klyn Grassroots Politics,” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 31, 1977, B1.

³² Beatty, interview.

³³ Peterson, interview.

6.3 Polygamy

Family was an important area in terms of women's struggle for agency, as cultural nationalists considered family the cornerstone of organizations, communities, and, ultimately, of what advocates viewed as a nascent nation. East members saw the family as key for sustaining a cultural and political foundation. They also viewed family as important for maintaining a consistent worldview within the home and in institutional life. Although monogamous couples and their children were the norm, the organization also consisted of "extended families."³⁴

Within The East, "extended family" found expression in polygamy, or marital and marriage-like relationships in which one person had multiple committed mates. The overwhelming majority of extended families took a form similar to polygyny. Polygyny was a plural marriage in which one man maintained spousal relationships with more than one woman.³⁵ The involved women engaged in a nuptial relationship with only the man and shared familial responsibilities such as parenting with the man and sometimes the other women in the family. It must be noted that, according to Konadu, extended families were neither necessary nor officially required to develop a sense of belonging to a large family or to be part of The East. Konadu additionally maintained that the practice provided children of The East and *Uhuru Sasa* with a community of people who parented them in many ways as extended-family mothers and fathers

³⁴ The "extended family" was defined by *Kawaida* advocates as a voluntary social unit rather than a biologically-determined grouping. Social units were based on shared values and perspectives rather than blood relationships. Constituents looked beyond descriptors such as half-, step-, and illegitimate in claiming extended-family members. Karenga, *Kawaida Theory*, 54-55.

³⁵ No narrator involved in this dissertation project recalled any East policies explicitly forbidding polyandry. Polygyny-like relationships, however, were the norm in extended families. According to Beatty's account, one woman who was affiliated with The East engaged in polyandry. Beatty observed that the woman had spousal relationships with two men at once for a short time. Adeyemi Bandele recalled no such instances of polyandry. Adeyemi Bandele, interview; Beatty, interview; This author uses the terms "marriage-like" or "spousal-type" because there is no evidence in the narratives that parties maintained multiple marriages at once according to U.S. laws.

(mamas and babas).³⁶ Advocates tended to agree that extended family practices benefited East children in the narratives collected for this dissertation project. However, their views on extended families also reflected that their beliefs about the nature and outcomes of polygamous practices for women were hotly contested.³⁷

Ostensibly, The East's extended family arrangement was not compulsory. Monogamy was more common than plural relationships. Only a small number of East adults actually entered polygamous-type relationships and this pattern was the norm in many other societies. Advocates viewed the practice of extended family through multiple lenses. Some saw it as part of a long tradition connecting them with African history and culture, a countercultural form of resistance undertaken in opposition to Western hegemony, or as a necessity to alleviate some of the problems African Americans faced, such as shortages of marriageable men and the lack of fathers in households. Others viewed plural marriage as inherently problematic, unacceptable, and resisted the practice, particularly as it appeared to be a guise for indulging men's promiscuous behaviors, a reflection of broader gender-role imbalances, and a burden for women.³⁸

³⁶ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 57.

³⁷ Women's narratives about the Us Organization also indicated polygamous-type relationships were contested ground, as in Imani Omotayo's (pseud.) recollection of the contention developing between Us Mumininas who advocated polygamy and a group of Malaikas who did not accept the practice. Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview.

³⁸ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 57; Adeyemi Bandele, interview; For information written in defense of extended family practices, not only for husbands, wives, single women, and children but also for elderly people, see Karenga, *Kawaida Theory*, 54-55; Woodard specifically described this kind of behavior as invoking "the traditional African concepts of polygamy for the manipulative and vulgar purposes of American adultery and sexual exploitation." Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 180; Amina Baraka also described polygamy as the use of "African traditions" to condone manipulative behaviors and reinscribe social hierarchies. Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; For an explanation of such ideals in the context of other communities of African Americans practicing polygyny, see Patricia Dixon-Spear, *We Want for Our Sisters What We Want for Ourselves: African American Women Who Practice Polygyny by Consent* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2009), xviii & xxx.

Mtamanika Beatty's reminiscence also reflected that, besides being based on a particular perception of certain African practices as well as traditions from the broader Muslim world, polygyny was an extension of *Kawaida* ideologies about gender roles as complementary. She believed that complementary gender roles seemingly represented equality but, in reality, meant women's places in society were limited. Beatty said, "There was still this way of looking at women from an Afrocentric point of view that . . . women were still, I can't say not equal but, on some levels, not equal in that women have their place and women are intelligent and they are capable and they can do things but women still have their place." Beatty continued, explaining that she believed some East advocates "looked at . . . polygamy as a means of being able to have more than one wife so you can grow your family, organization, and for it to be big and for the women to supplement each other with the rearing of the children." She added the following caveat to her explanation: "Ultimately it was the man that was supposed to benefit from that. . . . That's questionable but that was part of their thing."³⁹ Beatty's statements revealed important issues within the debate over polygamy. Proponents believed extended families were a beneficial component of fostering the large families, which were cornerstones of a nation, especially in the face of sex-ratio imbalances. On the other hand, people who contested the practice asserted that polygamy inherently perpetuated gender inequality, devalued wives, and destroyed families.

In one sense, certain East members viewed polygamy as beneficial and even necessary. Some of their language suggested that women's participation in polygynous marriages was a form of *kazi*. Certain reflections underscored the idea that a group of East advocates specifically saw polygyny as a method of establishing "solid," heteronormative relationships. They thought of it as a way to enlarge families, institutions, and ultimately "the nation," especially since

³⁹ Beatty, interview.

desirable women outnumbered marriageable men.⁴⁰ According to one participant on a radio interview with East women, “There was some polygamy going on in The East. That was a bit controversial to take on that kind of lifestyle.” Explaining the logic of such practices from her perspective, she said, “I think that there were a whole lot more sisters than there were brothers and we, at the time, considered ourselves nation builders and the way to build a nation is to what? Proliferate. So, some of us had to take on the responsibility of making certain that the sisters were capable of having children and should be fertile and ready to bear children and, at that point in time, have mates and sometimes we’d have to share mates. That was the point of the polygamous situation.” The narrator further suggested, despite the fact that an aspect of polygyny was an extension of certain men’s preferences for multiple female partners, some women might have viewed participating in polygynous relationships as a part of the work and sacrifice needed to build a nation.⁴¹

On both ends of the spectrum of opinions about extended family, women spoke as if the sacrifice and sharing required to enter polygyny by consent could essentially be viewed as a form

⁴⁰ The word “solid” is Adeyemi Bandele’s. Adeyemi Bandele, interview; The term marriageable is not the language of East advocates, but is from Dixon-Spear. Dixon-Spear theorized that, when the number of women was higher than men, competition intensified among females to secure mates. Securing the types of stable, monogamous, committed relationships and marriages that could help strengthen black communities became harder for women in racially-oppressive environments. It can be understood that challenges East advocates faced in terms of community demographics intensified their situation by further narrowing the field of possible mates. Problems stemming from racial oppression such as criminalization, drug addiction, unemployment and underemployment, and lack of educational opportunity further limited the number of marriageable women and especially decimated marriageable men’s numbers. Once certain cultural nationalists considered the low populations of marriageable men, some determined that turning away from Western expectations of monogamy as the only acceptable marriage form and toward non-Western and, what they understood as “traditional,” African practices would legitimize the polygynous-type intimate behaviors regularly occurring in Western society (but in a closeted manner), accommodate the imbalanced marriageable sex ratio, and provide for the kinds of large, heteronormative, male-headed families that could increase the membership of nationalist organizations and, thus, form support structures for the kind of black nation they envisioned. Dixon-Spear, *We Want for Our Sisters*, xxvi.

⁴¹ Angela Weusi, Aminisha Black, Abimbola Wali, Martha Bright, Tamisha Peterson, Akilah Mashariki, and Shukuru Copeland Sanders, “Memories of The East,” interview by Dwight Brewster, OJBK Radio, Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium, podcast audio, October 12, 2014, <http://www.centralbrooklynjazzconsortium.org/memoriesoftheeast.html>.

of *kazi*. “There was a theory behind why it would be a good idea to do it that way,” the East sister in the radio broadcast contended. “That was the theory that I subscribed to and some . . . other sisters subscribed to . . . that we had some good, strong sisters with good, strong genes who needed a man to help them bring more children into this nation that we were building.”⁴² Although she opposed polygyny, Tamisha Peterson also indicated the idea that some women entered or stayed in plural relationships in ways that could be seen as *kazi* because of their sense of duty to organization and cause. “The sisters stuck it out. They still stuck it out. They hung in there because they believed in the organization [and] where the organization was going,” she said.⁴³

Some of the women’s narratives also reflected the idea that accepting polygyny as a viable relationship arrangement was part of the process of unshackling themselves from Western beliefs. The nominal practice of monogamy as an exclusive marriage form was seen as one of many types of Western cultural domination from a certain perspective.⁴⁴ Some narrators broached the belief in monogamy as the only acceptable marital form as if it reflected the idea that African Americans were “victims” of their “education and training.” Further, some discourse in East advocates’ narratives suggested that such standards may have imposed disadvantageous

⁴² In one type of discourse in the narratives, polygyny was discussed as a way to foster honesty and accommodate men’s sexual desires. Discourse in the narratives implied that male promiscuity was natural, normal, ubiquitous, or inevitable. For instance, Adeyemi Bandele said polygyny allowed men the ability “to be honest in a relationship so that you don’t have to tip[toe] around.” A narrator in the podcast with East women opined that a part of The organization’s engagement with polygyny “had to do with just what men like to do.” Adeyemi Bandele, interview; OJBK interview, October 12, 2014; Dixon-Spear theorized that the “natural tendency for males to engage in sexual multiplicity” was a matter of social circumstance, which the imbalanced sex ratio influenced. Dixon-Spear, *We Want for Our Sisters*, xxxi.

⁴³ Peterson, interview.

⁴⁴ Dixon-Spear outlined this perspective in her book, asserting that a “closed” or closeted form of polygamy is actually practiced in the West. She also maintained that polygyny is actually a global norm, and the insistence on monogamy as the sole acceptable marital form represents a Western perspective. Dixon-Spear, *We Want for Our Sisters*, 1-21.

values given the challenges African Americans faced.⁴⁵ One overarching belief was that polygyny was an enduring and viable non-Western tradition with roots in Africa and the broader Muslim world. Some saw polygyny as a method of addressing the issue of sex ratio imbalance in the organization and the larger community, thus giving more women the chance to have a husband and a father in the household for their children than would be possible in a society viewing monogamy as the only acceptable form of marriage.⁴⁶

By contrast, some East members saw polygamy as intolerable and destructive. Sometimes this idea sprang from what people perceived to be the results of such arrangements. In other cases, narrators implied that polygamy was unacceptable because it fostered inherently-asymmetrical relationships in relation to power and expectations, with wives usually getting the short shrift in terms of rights and privileges.⁴⁷ Still other narrators stressed how problematic extended family relationships could be, as they sometimes fomented dissension and in-fighting within The East. A minority of advocates even attributed the issue of polygyny to the organization's demise.⁴⁸ Some of the women felt pressured to participate in extended families. Tamisha Wendie Peterson explained that someone "had this guy come and lecture, because we used to always have lecturers coming in too and he got on the subject of polygamy and, of course, the guys, the brothers, were really, really interested in polygamy and that actually became something that was forced on the sisters." Polygamous relationships were the most difficult aspect of gender relations in The East for Peterson. She flatly stated that she found she

⁴⁵ Safiya Bandele, interview.

⁴⁶ Beatty, interview; Adeyemi Bandele, interview; Shabaka, interview.

⁴⁷ Beatty, interview; For more information on this concept, also see Greg Strauss, "Is Polygamy Inherently Unequal?", *Ethics* 122 (April 2012): 516-544.

⁴⁸ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 57-58.

could navigate other issues she encountered within the organization but “the only ugly thing was the polygamy.”⁴⁹ Mtamanika Beatty expressed similar sentiments in a separate interview. She preferred not to be in a polygynous relationship but, nevertheless, felt pressured to do so. Beatty said coercive attitudes existed among members of the East brotherhood as well as the sisterhood and that “there was a lot of pressure for a lot of people . . . for everybody.”⁵⁰

Some participants also joined East-organization extended family units at the risk of conflict and strained relationships with their biological families. Relatives often viewed the practice as deviating from the Western norm of monogamous marriages. According to Adeyemi Bandele, who was part of an extended family, “There is the issue of acceptance by the biological families of the people who are involved and so sometimes they’re able to get buy-in and there’s . . . at least not rejection.” Offering more details, he said, “They may not have full acceptance but people will honor and respect the lifestyle that they have chosen and I find that often times, if people honor and respect it themselves, then those around them will do the same or they’re just going to leave them alone.”⁵¹

Some of the respondents in Konadu’s study criticized the “lack of balance and openness in male-female relationships, unresolved contradictions, and the absence of provisions for healing to occur” within polygamous relationships.⁵² Beatty explained her views on the ways The East’s polygamous relationships embodied imbalanced gender relationships when she said, “Having another spouse or having multiple spouses, that was their [men’s] right but not

⁴⁹ Peterson, interview.

⁵⁰ Beatty, interview.

⁵¹ Adeyemi Bandele, interview.

⁵² Konadu, *A View from the East*, 57.

necessarily for women.”⁵³ Peterson provided an example of dysfunction in East extended-family practices, explaining how husbands often used second wives to avoid the complexities and problems developing in primary relationships. “If you had a couple that were not getting along, he could just bring in a second wife. [A husband might say], ‘Oh, I don’t have to deal with this arguing or rough patch in our marriage, I’ll just have a second wife come in,’” she said.⁵⁴

Konadu explained that methods for healing such a situation would have entailed “the appropriate means to confront and resolve the emotional, psychological, and spiritual damage and conflict that result from unhealthy relationships.”⁵⁵ Instead, the oral narratives indicated that the kinds of conflict brewing in and around many polygynous relationships festered and spread in ways that threatened the long-term viability of certain families and the broader organization.

East narrators put forward the idea that certain traditional African cultural practices encouraged husbands to obtain current wives’ consent, and solicit their participation in the process of adding new wives to their families.⁵⁶ The dynamics at play in polygamous relationships, however, meant that the central spouse inherently had more rights, expectations, and control within the family. That is, the multiple spouses had to commit to one central spouse, who would divide economic resources and family services. The central spouse could engage in intimate physical and emotional relationships with more than one person within polygamous

⁵³ Beatty, interview.

⁵⁴ Peterson, interview.

⁵⁵ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 57.

⁵⁶ While some narrators highlighted as important, and even beneficial, consent among polygamous relationship members who all should have been informed adults willing to be open and honest. Others emphasized how often unspoken or unacknowledged, gendered power dynamics were at play in male/female relationships. Adeyemi Bandele, interview.

families.⁵⁷ Thus in The East, the practice of negotiating with existing wives could and often did play out as an optional courtesy, which husbands could choose to offer or withhold. As family heads, husbands could, in reality, decide not to obtain consent from existing wives. Husbands could invoke the power to become involved with other female partners based upon their own wishes and without consent or buy-in from existing wives. According to Peterson, some men in The East brought women into their families without first consulting their primary mates or against the wishes of dissenting wives. Peterson added that such men sometimes had to be coerced into caring for children of troubled first relationships. Additionally, some women reported consciously sabotaging established relationships in order to obtain a particular husband.⁵⁸

Whether or not first wives consented, levels of care and intimacy between members of the plural relationship were frequently imbalanced. Beatty explained that the husband in a polygynous relationship had to divide resources and time “between this woman, that woman, and those children.” Implying that subsequent mates often displaced rather than cooperated with or operated under the authority of primary wives, she said, “You want two wives, I tell you what, get rid of me. Let’s do that and you can go get number one and number two because I’m not going to be number two or number three or whatever.” One East brother pointed out that husbands needed to be careful not to favor junior or younger wives at the expense of longer-

⁵⁷Strauss, “Is Polygamy Inherently Unequal?”, 516-517 & 529-530.

⁵⁸ Peterson, interview; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 58; See Dixon-Spear for a discussion of the problematic nature of so-called “back-door” marriages and the essential importance of women’s consent in polygynous relationships. Dixon-Spear, *We Want for Our Sisters*, 193, 197, & 269; The outlined problems, from pressure to accept polygyny to neglecting initial families, were issues in multiple *Kawaida*-influenced groups including the Us Organization and Committee for a Unified Newark.

standing partners.⁵⁹ Several women recounted stories of polygyny serving males' prerogatives to seek younger women and newer, more exciting, or seemingly less problematic relationships.⁶⁰

While advocates of extended family relationships touted the benefits of the practice for developing sisterhood and cooperation, critics of polygyny argued that it harmed their friendships with each other.⁶¹ Peterson explained how The East's plural marriage practices changed the organization and eroded the bonds between advocates. She said some East sisters stopped speaking to each other. She also stated, "I think that was the big turn for me as far as the atmosphere there because now sisters are becoming very distrustful of each other." She also explained that women began to question others' intentions, thinking, "Are you sleeping with my man? [Are] you going to become his second wife or whatever?" The East "definitely had a different atmosphere with that. I was very sorry about that," Peterson lamented. Explaining that the possibility of being pressured to join an extended family prompted her to avoid forming an intimate relationship with any East man, she said, "Of course I knew I wasn't ever going to deal

⁵⁹ Adeyemi Bandele, interview.

⁶⁰ The East member who broached the topic of polygynous relationships as disguises for men's pursuit of more nubile and possibly more tractable partners was Tamisha Peterson; however, the issue was not unique to The East. It was also a problem in other organizations. Dixon-Spear pointed out that first wives of polygynous relationships involved in her study of African-American Muslims, Ausar Auset Society members, and Hebrew Israelites sometimes reported feeling discarded, taken for granted, or tossed away like objects rather than adults on equal footing with their husbands. Subsequent mates tended to be more positive about polygyny in their narratives than first wives. Peterson's narrative confirmed this trend. She said, "The second wife . . . would always be willing but the first wife was the resistant one in each case and that's understandable. That's human nature." Peterson, interview; Amina Baraka (CFUN/CAP), interview; Amina Thomas (Us), interview; Dixon-Spear, *We Want for Our Sisters*, 201; Powell, interview (BCD/CAP); Safiya Bandele (The East), interview.

⁶¹ In some narratives, advocates highlighted the positive aspects of sisterhood, which they thought had developed among women in extended families. Segun Shabaka and Adeyemi Bandele, both males, emphasized the beneficial relationships growing out of extended families as well as sisterhood among women. Bandele also brought up the idea that women might gain the ability to spend more time engaging in self-care and experience joy from co-parenting. Shabaka, interview; Adeyemi Bandele, interview; Safiya Bandele; Mtamanika Beatty, however, offered a different view. She explained that some East affiliates viewed polygamy as a way to enlarge institutions and to share parental duties in large family units. Further, she contended, such practices were questionable, particularly in that they ultimately supported male prerogatives more than women's. Beatty, interview.

with any brother in The East because I didn't like that."⁶² In this atmosphere, one woman even left the organization rather than undergo the discomfort of extended family living arrangements.⁶³

Critics also observed that polygyny tore families apart. In particular, Peterson reiterated that polygyny was not acceptable within the mainstream American cultural context outside the organization. She maintained that East women faced challenges within polygynous households that, according to her estimation, might not have been very different from the ones women faced in Africa. However, she opined, many African women were immersed in various cultures that accepted, normalized, and even encouraged polygyny. On the other hand, a number of North American community members, friends, and blood relatives disdained The East's open polygynous practices. Thus, facing pressures from inside and outside the organization, some East women left relationships in which husbands took subsequent mates without their consent. Some women even withdrew from the organization and the overall movement.⁶⁴

Peterson further remarked that she believed much of the onus for making extended families work fell on women. "Of course, the women really did try to make it work. If there was going to be another sister in the house, the sisters would really try to work. I didn't find the brothers involved in that as much, you know, once he had his two women that was it and the rest on how these women were going to get along and how you were going to raise children and how you were going to work this household out was up to the women, really," she explained.

⁶² Peterson, interview.

⁶³ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 58.

⁶⁴ Peterson, interview; Imani Omotayo (pseud.), Amina Thomas and Amina Baraka reported similar issues of discord over polygamy in interpersonal and family relationships in other Kawaida organizations. In particular, both Amina Thomas (Us) and Amina Baraka (CFUN/CAP) stressed how such discord caused families to break apart. Amina Thomas, interview; Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

Peterson's narrative highlighted many ways that The East's extended family practices fostered dysfunction and hurt the overall organization.

According to the narratives collected for this study, polygyny was acceptable and even necessary in the eyes of some East advocates and unacceptable and destructive to others. Segun Shabaka stressed the following about extended families: "Some lasted, some didn't last, just like some [monogamous] marriages . . . last and don't last." Mtamanika Beatty explained that extended family spousal arrangements did not appeal to her as an individual. She never, however, disavowed it outright as a viable practice because, she said, some members of large, extended families could ideally benefit from polygyny. "Together with . . . two wives, there may be five or six children and one [wife] can take care of all those children while the other is able to go out and work and be more productive and not worry about the children. That was the concept," she said.⁶⁵ Conversely, the same type of arrangement could pose financial challenges when spouses in the relationship did not work as a team to generate income for the entire family or when adult family members were unemployed or underemployed.⁶⁶

There were many facets to the issue of polygamous-type practices in The East. While some women approached polygyny as a form of *kazi* for nation building, others denounced it as a harmful practice for women. Still others approached it out of a desire to resist Western hegemony, to connect with certain African cultures and histories as they understood them, and as a family form. Such a familial arrangement met their needs as working, activist mothers and wives in ways suggesting that some advocates employed womanism, community feminism, or efficient womanhood within or alongside the framework of East extended families. Safiya

⁶⁵ Beatty, interview.

⁶⁶ Adeyemi Bandele, interview.

Bandele, reflected on her personal experiences in the Bandele extended family, which bear a lengthy discussion because it reflects such a nuanced view of the practices.

Safiya Bandele's story stands out because she considered herself a feminist and a cultural-nationalist participating in an extended family, which were seemingly incompatible positions. She met Adeyemi, the family patriarch, while they were both working as National Black United Front (NBUF) officials. A 1979 Black United Front booklet showed that Safiya [Diann Ellis] served as treasurer and chief of fundraising and a 1981 memo listed her as a member of the central committee alongside many others, including Adeyemi Bandele. Additionally, she was co-chair of the New York City Chapter's central committee and chair of the national women's section according to her own reflections. Safiya said she connected with Adeyemi over their common commitment to community activism and they subsequently developed a relationship. Safiya became part of the Bandele household in 1980 although she maintained that she never considered herself Adeyemi's wife. Members of the Bandele household were active in The East and the organization's expression of *Kawaida*-influenced cultural nationalism was integral to family life, a factor which Safiya found positive and fulfilling. Adeyemi Bandele was an official in The East and Safiya also participated in organizational life during the short time she lived with the Bandeles.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Safiya Bandele, interview; Adeyemi Bandele also mentioned Safiya and her role as a National Black United Front leader in his recollections. Explaining the interconnected nature of the two organizations, he said East family members helped form the NBUF and many participated in it. New York's Black United Front was a city-wide, grassroots organization formed of various entities dedicated to eliminating racism, insuring justice, promoting "collective Black ethics," and seeking complete liberation as well as political, economic, and social power for oppressed people. Adeyemi Bandele, interview; Noel Peter, "4 Evers Faculty Lose Jobs," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 23, 1982, 18; Jerry Byron and Jitu Weusi, eds., *Black United Front: Defend or Die* (Black United Front, 1979); Adeyemi Bandele to All NBUF Chapters/Organizing Committees, 2 December 1981, Series XIII: National Black United Front, 1979-1981 Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Atlanta, GA.

Safiya Bandele expounded on the positive aspects of being a part of an extended, or “blended” family, as she called it. She had a daughter from a previous relationship and bore a son while living with the Bandeles. In addition to being active in various other community organizations, she was a professor and director of the Center for Women’s Development at Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York. As a result of the many hats she wore, Safiya worked to balance her life as a single parent. The Bandeles’ extended family was a good fit for her “because [being] a single mother is really difficult, so the more adults you have loving a child . . . the better.” She also said, “It was a great time and I can really see the value of having loving adults in a child’s life.” She enjoyed “witnessing the beautiful growth of children, my own daughter . . . witnessing the [other Bandele children’s] growth and development, their being loved in that environment.”⁶⁸

Though part of a *Kawaida*-influenced, cultural-nationalist community and a polygynous family for a while, Safiya Bandele also considered herself a feminist and did not view herself as a subservient woman who walked “two steps behind” men.⁶⁹ In fact, Safiya has been cited in the literature as a pioneering African-American second-wave feminist. She was highlighted, in particular, for her support of other activists whose devotion to achieving women’s equality was

⁶⁸ Safiya Bandele, interview; “Retirement Ceremony for Renowned Medgar Evers College Professor,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 13-19, 2011, 31 & 39.

⁶⁹ Safiya Bandele engaged in feminist work before, during, and after her affiliation with the Bandeles and The East through such entities as the Center for Women’s Development, the Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers, the NBUF women’s section, and the Mother’s Day March for Action. Rosalyn Baxandall, “Re-Visioning the Women’s Liberation Movement’s Narrative: Early Second Wave African American Feminists,” *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (April 1, 2001): 230; Barbara Omolade, “Sisterhood in Black and White,” in *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women’s Liberation*, ed. Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 395; Loretta J. Ross mentioned Safiya Bandele alongside Jamala Rogers (St. Louis CAP) as particularly supportive of feminists in the black freedom struggle. Ross encountered Bandele and Rogers while working with the NBUF in the early 1980s. Loretta J. Ross, “A Personal Journey from Women’s Rights to Civil Rights to Human Rights,” *Black Scholar* 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 48.

inextricably linked with their commitment to black nationalism.⁷⁰ Safiya Bandele asserted that her feminism and participation in an extended family were not contradictory “because my feminism was grounded in Afrocentricity. My feminism was shaped and informed by being a leader over at [Medgar Evers] College and so it was no contradiction for me. . . . It was a fit.”⁷¹

Safiya Bandele also explained that her work at Medgar Evers, in Pan-African cultural nationalism, and in community activism were “parallel.”⁷² Radical feminists founded the college’s Center for Women’s Development and The East’s *Kawaida*-influenced cultural nationalism “flavored” the women’s center. Safiya Bandele also enacted her feminist grounding through her work in The East and NBUF, as she advocated the centrality of women’s issues to the Black Freedom Struggle. Her narrative exemplified the fact that East affiliates’ family lives and community activism were closely intertwined.

Based on experiences in the Bandele household as well as observations of other black-nationalist groups, Safiya came to believe polygyny could work for some women. Her narrative suggested a belief that polygyny and male chauvinism did not have to be linked, as she disavowed any form of the practice which fostered what she saw as imbalanced gender dynamics. Even though she believed polygyny could be beneficial for some women, she discovered that she needed more personal freedom than she had in the Pan-African cultural-nationalist extended-family household. One critique she forwarded was that “the cultural nationalists were really [in] that nuclear family, kind of father-as-protector mode and that was

⁷⁰ Ross, “A Personal Journey,” 48.

⁷¹ Safiya Bandele, interview.

⁷² Medgar Evers College was founded in 1969 and grew out of 1960s protests for a more inclusive CUNY system, as mentioned in Chapter 4. Located in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Medgar Evers College’s mission was focused on contributing to educational equity, social justice, and community uplift in central Brooklyn. Curtis Espinal Simmons et al., “The Legacy of Medgar Evers College,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 21, 2011, 5.

not my thinking.” She said, “I had my own light to shine so to speak, my own intelligence, my leadership, my own everything.” She continued, “Even though I had freedom in there, still I needed more freedom and so I left . . . physically, but have been emotionally tied to them always and always will be.”⁷³ Safiya Bandele’s thinking about polygyny without patriarchy as a potentially beneficial family arrangement complicates the binary of two opposing views about polygyny among *Kawaida* advocates.

East advocates had such varied experiences due to several factors. Primarily, it must be remembered that, as a popular social and educational institution, The East was a big-tent organization. According to Martha Bright, “The East was a ‘beacon’ for people of African descent.” The organization was formed of “multi-tiered, concentric circles of people who came from different backgrounds and experiences,” said Bright. “I can’t emphasize this enough. Multi-tiered, concentric circles, with people who came from all different backgrounds and experiences and you come to an organization that says ‘y’all come.’ You’re going to have a lot of diversity.” She further explained, “Some of the [*Kawaida*-influenced] organizations were more chauvinistic than others. It depends on who was in there. It depends on how open and embracing they were.”⁷⁴ There was room for such diversity because “*umoja* and *kujichagulia* made room for unity without uniformity,” according to Bright. “Many things were similar because we have an overriding philosophy of *Kawaida*, structural framework but the ways they ran their organizations on a day-to-day basis were not necessarily the same,” she said. “We could have

⁷³ Safiya Bandele, interview.

⁷⁴ Bright, interview, part 1 of 2.

umoja and *ujima* without being exactly alike. We could have self-determination. Bright added, “We don’t have to be exactly alike.”⁷⁵

Perhaps the expectation of “unity without uniformity” also explains women’s varied experiences in terms of resisting polygyny in *Kawaida*-influenced organizations. “Unity without uniformity” or “operational unity” was a reflection of *umoja* and one which Karenga forwarded during the 1967 Black Power Conference as a means of assisting with the development of a black united front. The idea meant group leaders in *Kawaida*-influenced coalitions should dialogue and decide on how to “work in parallel and mutually supporting ways,” but that individual groups could theoretically “keep their own identity.”⁷⁶ The literature spotlights Amina Baraka as an advocate of women’s rights within the Congress of African People in general, and she specifically fought polygyny.⁷⁷ As the top-ranking CAP leadership, both Amina and Amiri Baraka condemned plural marriage practices and established CFUN as “the political headquarters and exemplar for the national CAP organization, projecting a monogamous family ideal.” Nevertheless, tensions related to polygamy were widespread and entrenched.⁷⁸

The issue of “unity without uniformity” was contested ground. A December 1973 letter from East/Brooklyn CAP chapter director, Jitu Weusi to national CAP chairman, Amiri Baraka, revealed a growing rift between the groups. In the letter, Weusi raised concerns about a cult of

⁷⁵ Bright, interview, part 1 of 2.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 102; Amiri Baraka commented on “unity without uniformity,” asserting that CAP was never meant to be a united front but was supposed to be “an organization with a unitary ideology.” Comments of Chairman on Resignations of Haki Madhubuti and Jitu Weusi (IPE and The East), n.d. Series V: Congress of African People, 1960-1976: Congress of African People, Major Topics: Baraka, “Revolutionary Party: Revolutionary Ideology”, 1974, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection.

⁷⁷ Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 47.

⁷⁸ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 180-181.

personality around Amiri Baraka, CAP leadership's insistence that The East be made a "carbon copy" of CFUN, the continued survival of "unity without uniformity," and possible perceptions that The East was "not a *Kawaida* organization" because of how different some of its practices were from those of Newark CAP. Most pointedly, Weusi wanted to "clarify the concept of the 'Extended Family'" as practiced by advocates of his New York-based group. Weusi's comments point toward Woodard's assertions about the intensifying conflicts concerning polygamy. Amiri Baraka pointed out that certain polygamists were ousted from CAP.⁷⁹

East advocates' discordant viewpoints on extended family practices reflect an aspect of this struggle and Tamisha Peterson's narrative reflected that The East was one of the CAP battlegrounds in the conflict around polygamy and reveals the fact that women in the organization were not silent on the issue. Peterson discussed the difficulties women faced in The East in terms of resisting polygynous practices and said those wanting to stop the practice were "steamrolled." She recalled that women organized and made decisions about many other issues. Peterson remembered that she and another East sister even joined the elders' council. "We were pretty proud," she said. "We were pretty outspoken. . . . We weren't feeling cowered in any kind of way. . . . We didn't feel like we were oppressed in any way except for the polygamous aspect." Polygynous practices were difficult to thwart due to the dynamics of intimate relationships, she explained. A woman "hooked up with somebody and the guy says, well you

⁷⁹ Letter from Jitu Weusi to Amiri Baraka, December 12, 1973 (transcribed from the original letter) in *Konadu, A View from the East*, 147; Amiri Baraka's response to the letter stated that CAP cadre organizations were to be "carbon copies of each other." Baraka upheld what he termed antifeudalist, antiatavist, antiprimitive nationalist, antielitist ideological development in the Congress of African People. Comments of the Chairman on Resignations of Haki Madhubuti and Jitu Weusi (IPE and The East); Cult-of-personality behaviors included Blessed Baraka, an official celebration of Amiri Baraka's birthday as a "high holy day" and buttons with Baraka's face. Leo Baraka paper, n.d., Series IV: Newark (New Jersey), 1913-1980: Committee for Unified Newark, *Kawaida Concepts*, 1971, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection; Baraka, *Autobiography*, xx; Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 86.

know, this is my [new *house*] what're you going to do? What do you [say]? I'm leaving. That's your only other option, or you could give him a lecture on, well this is not how it's done."⁸⁰

One may wonder why certain East advocates upheld such a controversial practice. In their narratives, advocates suggested that polygyny fostered the kinds of large kinship groups that were a cornerstone of nation building. Members of extended families have said that they established intergenerational reserves of members dedicated to East ideologies. These human resources have kept East traditions alive and have enlarged the community of activists who continue some of the now-defunct organization's cultural and political work through a myriad of other groups. The organization's history showed, however, that maintaining institutional leadership and culture among generations proved difficult and some advocates opined that controversial and contested practices also contributed to the organization's downfall. On one hand, advocates of extended family practices viewed them as a beneficial, necessary form of *kazi* that could enlarge the organization, community, and nation and help overcome a sex-ratio imbalance. On the other hand, polygynous relationships were seen as intolerable, deviant, inherently unequal, and destructive to the kinds of community and nation-building work East advocates undertook.⁸¹ Polygamy, therefore, proved to be a conundrum as a community-organizing and nation-building tool for The East and for other *Kawaida*-influenced, cultural-nationalist organizations.

⁸⁰ Peterson, interview.

⁸¹ Konadua, *A View from the East*, 58; Peterson, interview.

6.4 *Black News: “Of, By, and For Our Community”*⁸²

Scholars of the black press often trace its formation to the emergence of *Freedom’s Journal* (1827-1829), the first African-American newspaper. Fifty years after the Revolutionary War, members of America’s free black communities lived in a state of quasi-citizenship facing hardships ranging from systemic economic marginalization and political disfranchisement to subtle, individual insults and indignities. In the most basic sense the black press sought to counter the kinds of negative narratives emanating from such an environment. The African-American media outlets also sought to convey black community values and beliefs as well as expose pressing issues. Over the next 150 years, black newspapers continued this mission, linking individuals by expressing their common struggles and purpose.⁸³ Developed in the vein of black radical papers such as *Rebellion News* (Boston), *The Black Panther* (Berkeley), and *Muhammad Speaks* (Chicago), *Black News* incorporated both local and global issues facing the black communities. The work of *Black News* staffers was a form of “agitating,” “educating,” and helping to “organize” for the purpose of community development. Through such work, *Black News*, writers endeavored to use their words and ideas for invigorating action in such areas as politics, education, and entrepreneurship.⁸⁴

Selling *Black News* was one of many activities through which East advocates engaged “the African-based” community on the local, national and international levels. In fact, according to former East member, Angela [Weusi] Black, the paper was not just an organizational

⁸² Big Black, Around Our Way, *Black News*, I, no. 33 (July 17, 197), 18; The term “African-based community is from Konadu, *A View from the East*, 68.

⁸⁴ Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson II, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997) 3; Fisher, *Black Literate Lives*, 59, 61-62, & 82.

publication but it was a community effort.⁸⁵ Additionally, Peterson characterized *Black News* as “the voice for us to let the community know what was going on.”⁸⁶ Both men and women sold the *Black News* paper and the activity was viewed as an integral part of the nation-building effort.⁸⁷

Tamisha Peterson pointed out that *Black News* was also important because, “It just told what was going on in the community from a black perspective. She stated, “They always heard the one side of the story, this time they could get the other side.” Tamisha Peterson’s term, “black perspective” had a complex meaning.⁸⁸ Fisher elaborated on the idea that some East family members believed the mainstream African-American press was inadequate because it was filtered through the lens of white Americans’ beliefs and concerns. Specifically addressing the use of the term “black” in relation to the press, Jitu Weusi defined such deficient media organs as “‘Negro’ papers.” On the other hand, he termed those circulars defiantly addressing and reflecting the perspectives of African-descended people “‘Black’ papers.”⁸⁹ Although the

⁸⁵ Weusi et al., interview by Dwight Brewster, October 11, 2014; *Black News* is described as a “community publication” aimed at various types of African-American people making up the neighborhood (male and female, young and old) in its first volume. “‘Black News’ of Bedford Stuyvesant,” *Black News* 1, no. 1 (October 1969): cover; The idea that *Black News* was a community effort is also reflected in the fact that the circular was a mix of articles authored by East affiliates and members of other black-nationalist organizations such as the Black Liberation Army. Although the magazine became the “official communications instrument of the *EAST*” in October 1969, not all of the articles “reflected the position of the *EAST* organization.” According to Konadu, the circular was considered “a communication link within the African-based community” and the circular’s subject matter was often contested ground. *Black News* 3, NO. 23 (May 1978), 2; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 68-71.

⁸⁶ Peterson, interview.

⁸⁷ One author reported telling a *Black News* buyer that the 25¢ fee being charged for the paper at the time, “would figure big in the resurrection of our people.” Mittie Black, “Dialogue with a ‘Coloured’ Beauty,” *Black News*, 3, no. 5, December 1975, 25.

⁸⁸ Peterson, interview.

⁸⁹ Fisher, *Black Literate Lives*, 60-61.

women defined *Black News* as a community effort, they also emphasized that the paper circulated across the nation and around the world.⁹⁰

Initially getting involved with The East as a *Black News* volunteer, memories of working to ensure the paper was distributed in various venues across the globe figured prominently in Martha Bright's remembrances. The newspaper reached an estimated maximum circulation of 50,000. Bright recalled, "It not only went all over the city, all over the nation, it went into prisons. It went into hospitals and it went all over the world." Expressing the fact that the periodical had a militant, "tell it like it is" style, Bright went on to say, "In fact the paper was so radical that some countries would not even permit it. When you got to customs, if they saw *Black News* they confiscated all of them . . . particularly in the Caribbean, some of those countries that were undergoing self-determination struggles at that time and what not." According to Bright's narrative, writing the truth of and for black communities was an important component of East women's activism.⁹¹

Organizing paper sales complemented Tamisha Peterson's work as an *Uhuru Sasa* teacher. "I used to have my class go out and we would have them spaced up on a block so they wouldn't be too far from my eyesight and try to sell *Black News* to some people that passed," she said. "We would do that for about an hour or so."⁹² This speaks to certain nationalist educational

⁹⁰ *Black News* reportedly circulated in five countries; however, most sales occurred on New York City streets. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 72.

⁹¹ Bright speaking during the Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014; Maisha Fisher attributed the quote "Tell it like it is" to Jitu Weusi. Fisher, *Black Literate Lives*, 62; See, "Letters to the Editor," *Black News* 1, no. 33 (July 17, 1971), 19 and "Letters to the Editor: ILANI (Notice)," *Black News*, 2 no. 12 (December 26, 1973), 22, for more on *Black News* and incarcerated populations see "POWs Forum," which was a regular column for incarcerated people of African descent in American prisons.; Letters to the editor revealed that readers received *Black News* in locations such as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Wilmington, North Carolina. *Black News* 2, no. 10 (October 22, 1973), 11; Estimated circulation and other details about distribution and staff composition can be found in Konadu, *A View from the East*, 69 & 72.

⁹² Peterson, interview.

styles that encouraged and celebrated a culture of reading because of the belief that community survival depended on literacy and learning. Fisher emphasized the essential mission of *Black News* and its origins in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville uprising, which was to “correctly” educate African-descended youth and their families with a student-centered curriculum emphasizing parental involvement and black-cultural-nationalist values.⁹³ Women were at the center of this process, particularly in the roles of news writers and teachers.

For [New York City native] Abimbola Wali, selling *Black News* sparked her interest in joining The East, an act which she described in terms similar to a religious conversion. Wali said, “I was riding the A Train in . . . December 1969, and a young lady was walking through the train selling *Black News*. . . . It was 10¢ and I purchased a copy,” she explained. Wali remembered the articles immediately sparked a lively conversation between her mother and her about their family and the possibility of having African bloodlines. Wali explained writers discussed black Americans’ African heritage, stating, “I just had never heard anything about African heritage or . . . being of African descent and I asked my mother about it and she said, well nobody in our family was from Africa and I don’t know what they’re talking about.”⁹⁴

Wali said that the incident on the train sparked her interest and she began selling *Black News* at the New York City office where she was a secretary. “I took it to work . . . I was working for the city at that time and I showed it. I start making copies and showing it to people and then it asked at the bottom . . . if you wanted to sell *Black News*,” she said. “Since so many of my co-workers were interested in the *Black News*, I called the number and one of the brothers

⁹³ Fisher, *Black Literate Lives*, 64 & 73.

⁹⁴ Abimbola Wali in Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014.

who was part of the Black Panthers, he delivered the papers to my job. So, I start selling *Black News*.”⁹⁵

Delivering money collected from *Black News* sales took Wali to The East’s cultural center. “I called The East so I could come and bring the money and when I entered The East, I saw all the people, all the sisters and brothers all around and I had my permed [straightened] hair and my mini-skirt on and I was fly. I walked in there and everybody was cultural. . . . So, then I wanted to volunteer my services,” she said. Wali explained that she was accepted by group members and The East eventually became her second home. She believed her affiliation with the group transformed her sense of self as well as her outlook. She recalled that The East changed her lifestyle in that she began, “making long clothes and took off my miniskirts and stopped eating pork and my life changed and has been changed since. So, I give praises to Brother Jitu and The East because it just opened up my worldview.”⁹⁶

Although The East was open to the community, it never developed a mass following. Many mainstream African Americans eschewed the lifestyle changes accompanying affiliation with *Kawaida*-influenced groups. Tamisha Peterson observed that the level of *kazi* required to sustain The East family and the larger movement never felt like a job to her; nevertheless, she said it “was still challenging.” She continued, “You would like to see . . . your biological family get a little bit more involved. Well, I don’t think too many of us had luck with that. They might pop in every now and then, see a jazz show or something, [and] pop back out.” Echoing the kind of sentiment that Scot Brown observed within the Us Organization—that the larger community’s

⁹⁵ Abimbola Wali in Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014.

⁹⁶ Abimbola Wali in Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014; Wali’s use of “fly” in this case meant hip, cool, or trendy in style.

reticence or outright refusal to undergo lifestyle changes reflected a lack of awareness—Peterson said, “I don’t know how full the understanding was . . . [of] the whole movement.”⁹⁷ Such dynamics tended to heighten some women’s sense of distance from their biological families which, in turn, made the familial character of *Kawaida*-influenced organizations more attractive to some while alienating others.

Aminisha [Weusi] Black recalled that she became interested in writing in the midst of her community activism with The East. Her passion for reporting was fostered at *Black News* and led to publications in other local media outlets. Black was a native of South Carolina. She migrated to New York in the late 1960s and met other East advocates through a friend working in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district. When *Uhuru Sasa* opened, Aminisha Black enrolled her two sons and became the school’s bookkeeper. She also took on the role of typesetter at the *Black News*. Later, she began investigating and writing stories. The fact that Black reported on politics and was not merely limited to topics related to domesticity and social organization supports the women’s claims that they were not systematically limited to restrictive *Kawaida* gender roles in The East. Black’s narrative also indicated that The East functioned as a space for building black females’ leadership and career skills.⁹⁸

Brooklyn native Martha Bright also expressed the idea that The East functioned as a place where women could develop wide-ranging expertise through their community work. She initially came to volunteer at *Black News* with other members of a local Republic of New Africa

⁹⁷ Peterson, interview; Brown, *Fighting for US*, 21; Also see Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 22 for commentary about an advocate and his biological father’s assessment of him as a *Kawaida* “fanatic.”

⁹⁸ For an example of stories written by Aminisha [Weusi] Black see, Aminisha Weusi, “Arthur Eve Speaks at Forum,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 5, 1978, A-4; Aminisha Weusi, “Assemblyman Arthur Eve Speaks at B.C.C. Forum,” *Black News*, 3, no. 24 (August 1978), 20 & 26; Aminisha Weusi, “Bklyn Tenants Fight to Save Their Homes,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 27, 1985, 9. Black has more recently written for *Our Times Press*. Weusi et al., interview with Dwight Brewster, October 11, 2014; Black and Angaza, *The EAST Sisterhood*, 3.

formation. Bright explained, as “part of our responsibility with *Black News*, we learned how to do mass mailings and packaging stuff up and we used to get that stuff out all over the world.”⁹⁹ According to Bright’s account, women filled many roles on the *Black News* staff from its earliest days. “Sister Fujii [Breland] and Penda [Aiken] would type the copy under the leadership of Jim Williams, original editor of *Black News*,” she remembered.¹⁰⁰

When asked how much influence women had on the content of the *Black News*, Bright responded, “a lot.” She elaborated, “I said the original editor was a brother named Jim Williams but I named all those women who were there.”¹⁰¹ She recalled that approximately equal numbers of women and men comprised the *Black News* staff. The “East Time-Line,” reflected that women actually outnumbered men on the original *Black News* staff. The documents showed that Jim Williams was the paper’s first editor and that the original staff (1969-1970) at the Fulton Street location included Ante Brown, Addie Rimmer, Martha Bright, Monifa King, and Fujii Breland. Men joined the staff during the same period, after the headquarters moved to 10 Claver Place. During the years 1969-1972, women appeared to outnumber men on staff; however, males were the operation’s official lead editors.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014; The Republic of New Africa (RNA) or the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PG-RNA) is a group which began in 1968. Its aim was to call for a plebiscite with the intent of forming an independent nation from the five Southern states of Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina (contingent upon agreement with the Native American Indians of the area); hence, their slogan, “Free the Land.” Members of the PG-RNA also wanted to: educate people about the existence of African Americans as an “oppressed, colonized nation”; raise awareness about their right to self-determination; and obtain reparations for members of the black nation from the United States. Citizenship in the RNA was not limited to people of African descent. The Japanese-American female activist, Yuri Kochiyama, was its first naturalized citizen. Iyaluua Ferguson and Herman Ferguson, *An Unlikely Warrior, Herman Ferguson: Evolution of a Black Nationalist Revolutionary* (North Carolina: Ferguson-Swan Publications, 2011), 204 & 284.

¹⁰⁰ Bright, interview; In “A Yoruban Wedding at The East,” *Black News*, 1, no. 33 (July 17, 1971), 10, the author cited that Sister Fujii had been serving as the *Black News* typesetter for more than a year at the time; Penda Aiken was listed a *Black News* staffer in Konadu, *A View from the East*, 68-69; Other female typesetters included Muslimah, Shukuru Sanders, and Oseye [Mchawi]. “East Time-Line,” 1; OBJK Podcast 1.

¹⁰¹ Bright, interview.

¹⁰² “East Time-Line,” 1.

Although Akili Walker remembered Martha Bright as “a sister . . . who was in charge of the newspaper” and who influenced its content, Segun Shabaka the final editor, confirmed all the paper’s official editors were males.¹⁰³ Shabaka further contended, however, that women played integral roles in *Black News*, The East, and *Kawaida*-influenced organizations in general. Shabaka noted that he instated an editorial board during his tenure as *Black News* editor. For the years 1978-1983, he explained, “Taaliba and Muslimah,” both women, would meet with other board members and decide which items to put into *Black News*. “Taaliba was the key person behind the major interviews we did with the convicted and confessed assassin of Malcolm X. She went into the prison and collected those interviews along with brother Adeyemi, who was [also] on the board,” noted Shabaka. Reiterating his point about the important roles women played, not only in composing and disseminating the news, but in the broader East organization, he stated, “I know when I was there women were playing major roles in all the different components of the organization especially after [19]74 or [19]75, if not before.”¹⁰⁴

Emphasizing the numerous jobs she performed as part of her community work with the *Black News* staff, Bright said, “I reported, I edited. . . . I did a lot of proofreading. I have *Black News* [showing] that I wrote articles.” She remembered piling into a car with other female staffers to investigate stories. She elaborated, “We would go places and do original reporting. We had a big say and a big part.” Explaining that she was not confined to typical, feminized, mundane tasks and routine office work, Bright emphasized, “We weren’t just the typing pool. . . .

¹⁰³ Akili Walker, telephone interview with author, August 27, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Segun Shabaka, email correspondence to author, March 13, 2015; This author took the years 1978-1983 from the literature to demarcate Shabaka’s tenure as *Black News* editor. Konadu, *A View from The East*, 72.

I didn't know how to type really. I didn't even do hunt and pecking. That was not me. . . . [*Black News*] was a real hands-on operation and the sisters were a big part of that."¹⁰⁵

It is important to add, however, that females' appointments to formal, top-level leadership roles were limited. Although some served on the certain governing boards of the circular, men generally outnumbered them as titled leaders according to available information.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, there was no woman among the four males officially holding the title of editor. Over *Black News*' years of publication from 1969-1984, the editors were Jim Williams, Salik Mwando, Basir Mchawi, and Segun Shabaka.¹⁰⁷ Akili Walker's memories of Martha Bright as "in charge" of *Black News* were important, however. Recognition of women's *kazi* and their unofficial leadership roles within *Kawaida*-influenced organizations was often based on the informal ways constituents respected and recognized their work and commitment to struggle rather than via titled appointments.

¹⁰⁵ Bright, interview; The fact that editor Jim Williams encouraged each staff member to complete an entire issue under his leadership could have lent to Bright's recollections of work at *Black News* as intensive and comprehensive. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 69; Bright might have pointed out typing because the occupation has historically been feminized, with low pay in comparison to more male-dominated professional fields such as law, engineering, and accounting. Women held 95% of certain typing jobs in 1969. According to a government survey, these positions paid \$371-\$430 a month on average in comparison to the lowest-paid professionals (file clerks), who made \$324, and \$2,452 for the highest-paid professionals in the survey (top-level attorneys). *National Survey of Professional, Administrative, Technical, and Clerical Pay* June 1969, U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 1654, February 1970, 6-8.

¹⁰⁶ In October 1969, the *Black News* board consisted of six males and one female, Sia Berhan, a high-schooler and member of the African American Students Association (ASA) who had emerged from the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experience and served as the paper's research director. In 1972, the board consisted of all men, Jim Williams, Donald Blackman, Leroy Bowser, Jitu Weusi, George Dudley, Maurice Fredericks (Msemaji Weusi), Andre Womble (Salik Mwando), and Frank Richards. By August 1983, the editorial board reportedly consisted of three males, Segun Shabaka, Adeyemi Bandele, and Msemaji Weusi. Muslimah Mashariki was the only female in the group. *Black News*, 1, no. 2 (October 1969) n.p.; Charles S. Isaac, *Inside Ocean Hill-Brownsville: A Teacher's Education, 1968-69* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 184; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 14 & 69; Editorial Board, *Black News*, 4, no 25 (August 1983), 2.

¹⁰⁷ Segun Shabaka, email correspondence, March 6, 2015.

Kwasi Konadu pointed out the most important legacies of the *Black News* for the communities it served. Primarily, he opined, the periodical carried out the function of “liberating and developing the African-based psyche” by promulgating Pan-African nationalist thought and practice in terms laypeople could understand. The newspaper left a historical record of the internal and external matters of The East organization.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, East women remembered that, through serving the community as *Black News* staffers, they found their experiences provided essential skills and training, which they could use in other areas of their lives.¹⁰⁹

Producing and distributing *Black News* was not the only way women affiliated with The East expressed their activist impulses and served the community. Women also involved themselves in the voter registration drives, fundraisers, political campaigns, boycotts, and pickets that were, according to Jitu Weusi, a staple of Brooklyn’s grassroots politics. Members participated in an array of nonviolent forms of direct action and awareness raising in association with fellow community organizations like the Coalition of Concerned Leaders and Citizens. Focused on specific causes impacting the neighborhood, women engaged in activities from passing out leaflets, flyers, and posters to braving the elements as they occupied strategic swaths of the Brooklyn pavement.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 72

¹⁰⁹ Black and Angaza, *The EAST Sisterhood*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Peterson, interview; Jitu Weusi, “The Re-Emergence of B’klyn Grassroots Politics,” B1; Ad for meeting of the Black Political Convention; Under the CAP umbrella, women from various Kwaiaida-influenced organizations were also involved in such activities as voter registration and leadership training, although men tended to be dominant in these endeavors in terms of numbers and leadership qualities were still expressed within a masculinist framework. For example, the ideal leadership model as outlined in the July 3-5, 1971 Black Political Convention document explicitly included “sisters” as potential leaders, but the prototype was identified with the terms “the Black man” and “he.” Examples only outlined males’ roles like kings and pharaohs (not queens and candaces). Males composed the majority of the official convention leadership; nevertheless, some women were in leadership roles. For instance, Muminina Akiba and Malaika Jaribu (CFUN) were on the national involvement planning committee and Jaribu, Sister Charlene (The East), and Sister Elsie Scott were central committee members. Moreover, the imprint of women’s challenges to male dominance and struggles for equality could be seen. For instance, the party’s “Statement of General Principles” asserted the goal of helping all black people form a national identity which

In part, the women undertook such grassroots activism in the context of rising tensions between black community members and white (both Jewish and Gentile) business owners who they viewed as interlopers. Frustrated African Americans have historically reported experiencing situations in which shopkeepers desired their dollars but refused to respect them as full citizens and human beings. Such attitudes were reflected in store owners' reticence to staff their businesses with African-descended people, a lack of local philanthropic projects, and punitive attitudes during times of disagreement or conflict. Many African Americans observed that certain rapacious businesspeople drained money from their communities while apathetically watching blight grow.¹¹¹ One tragic example was the case of the Triangle Shoe Store.

Several advocates remembered the early 1970s boycott of the Triangle Shoe Store as an example of East organizational involvement in direct action.¹¹² Triangle was located in Bed-Stuy in the 1200 block of Fulton Street near Nostrand Avenue, "right smack in the black community."

included "equal opportunities and rights for all people whatever sex." At some point, the statement was crossed out on the document and replaced with the handwritten words, "respect for the worth of every black person & the determination to work together on an equal basis," as if document drafters wrestled with the language of gender equality. For information reflecting women's roles in the Black Political Convention and party formation, see Cheo Elimu, "Statement of General Principles," 2, Party Leadership: It's Role and Method of Selection," 2-4, & 6, & contact list in Series VI: National Black Conferences And National Black Assembly, 1968-1975: National Black Assembly, Planning Documents, 1971, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collections, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History, Atlanta Fulton Public Library, Archives Unbound, July 24, 2015; Adeyemi Bandele noted that East organizing was primarily the domain of men and that specific roles were assigned according to the types of skills advocates brought with them when they joined. Bandele also noted that men and women from inside and outside the organization joined in The East's political activities. He particularly noted, however, that there were specific campaigns related to police killings of neighborhood inhabitants in which East women participated with their entire families. He said, "We were out on picket lines, et cetera. . . . Mother, father, and children were out there." Adeyemi Bandele, interview.

¹¹¹ Lee, "Fulton Street Journal: A Merchant Watches as Bed-Stuy Gentrifies," *The New York Times*, May 9, 2009, A15; For more commentary on predatory businesses and the African-American community, see quote from Malcolm X in *White Merchants and Black Power*, *Black News* 1 no. 39 (April 1972): 25; and Martin Luther King, Jr., Press Conference on Operation Breadbasket, Chicago, Illinois, July 11, 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers, 1950-1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹² In "The Re-Emergence of B'klyn Grassroots Politics," Jitu Weusi reported that the Triangle boycott occurred in 1973 but reports of the boycott appeared in a 1972 *Black News* article. Jitu Weusi, "The Re-Emergence of B'klyn Grassroots Politics," B; "White Merchants and Black Power," 25-26.

The store was robbed of \$59 on February 12, 1972.¹¹³ A Triangle manager reportedly chased the alleged thief down the street while “shooting like he was in the wild, wild, West,” Walker wrote.¹¹⁴ He fired a gun at the young man he believed committed the robbery and three bullets struck the unarmed teen in the back. According to the account of the incident in *Black News*, the Triangle manager would not allow anyone to aid the youth, who consequently died from his wounds on the sidewalk.¹¹⁵ “The community was outraged,” Walker reported.¹¹⁶

In response to the slaying, community members organized a picket line in front of Triangle every day for months in a concerted effort to prevent shoppers from patronizing the business. Capturing similar sentiments to the ones Mtamanika Beatty expressed as a black mother worried about racialized and gendered violence against young, African-descended males, Walker pointed out that East women involved themselves in the protests and were especially concerned because the victim was a black boy.¹¹⁷ In the final analysis of the Triangle Shoe Store incident, both Akili Walker and Jitu Weusi reported that the group’s actions yielded successful results. Walker explained, “The end result was that the store shut its doors and moved out of the neighborhood.”¹¹⁸ Weusi broadly theorized that the kinds of street-level, grassroots community-

¹¹³ Jitu Weusi, “The Re-Emergence of B’klyn Grassroots Politics,” B1; Walker, *Turn the Horns On*,” 17-18; Triangle Shoe Store advertisement, *New York Amsterdam News*, November 22, 1969, 45; Quote is from Peterson, interview; “White Merchants and Black Power,” 26

¹¹⁴ Walker’s account of the Triangle incident seemed to conflate an incident occurring at a different Fulton Street shoe store and the one at Triangle. Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 18; “White Merchants and Black Power,” 25.

¹¹⁵ “White Merchants and Black Power,” 26.

¹¹⁶ Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 18.

¹¹⁷ Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 18; Walker, interview; Beatty, interview as referenced in chapter one; Such concerns about the ways gendered violence specifically impacted black boys may have partially stemmed from beliefs that racial, gender, and cultural stereotypes about African-American males as criminal, thuggish, hyperaggressive, and combative fueled state-initiated and state-sanctioned violence against them. Lindsey, “Post-Ferguson,” 235.

¹¹⁸ Weusi, “The Re-Emergence of B’klyn Grassroots Politics,” B1; Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 18.

control actions, “confrontation politics,” and political education projects in which East members participated put hundreds of protestors in the streets, brought attention to important community issues such as predatory business practices and unjust policing, helped raise funds to continue the Black Freedom Struggle, and set the stage for future coalitions and alliances.¹¹⁹

Moreover, Tamisha Peterson’s recollections about females’ participation in the strike revealed the subtleties of women’s participation in East protests. She remarked that advocates would assign various people to the picket lines. She also explained that, although it was not official organizational policy, mostly men and childless women went to the picket lines while women with children were home performing family-related tasks. Such activities were generally associated with domesticity rather than public action. Many East advocates, however, discussed them as forms of activism in their own right. This association stemmed from the fact that The East was a *Kawaida*-influenced organization in which advocates viewed the acts of fostering strong families and healthy children as cornerstones of institution-building. Peterson pointed out, “We had our own children. So after we taught [school], we couldn’t just go dash out on the picket line. It was time to go home, take care of the kids, do homework, feed them, put them to bed, stuff like that.”¹²⁰ Politically active and eager to join in boycotts and other actions not requiring extensive time away from family, many of the women apparently viewed the domestic sphere as one of many spaces for carrying out black resistance. East mothers conscientiously spent time caring for and uplifting black children, who often faced very different realities in the broader society.

¹¹⁹ Weusi, “The Re-Emergence of B’klyn Grassroots Politics,” B1.

¹²⁰ Peterson, interview.

6.5 *“We Stood for the Community”*¹²¹

As stated in Chapter Two, Pittsburgh-born Tamanika Howze developed into a staunch community activist during the mid-1960s and early 1970s. She remembered initially having an affinity for traditional civil rights organizations like the NAACP. Having been exposed to such activists as Stokely Carmichael, however, she characterized herself as a youthful and “idealistic” person who was impatient with the slow pace of change. She said, “I’m this young person wanting things to move more swiftly and I think they were just moving too slow and my political thought had changed from civil rights to Black Nationalism.” As a result of her desire to help black communities in Pittsburgh quickly grow and prosper, she affiliated with several different organizations. Moving from the city’s Hill district to what she characterized as the more “politically-astute” and culturally-active neighborhood of Homewood during her high-school junior year provided a spark for involvement in various organizations and changed her political as well as her cultural consciousness.¹²²

A neighborhood of working-class European immigrant families and upper-middle-class African Americans during the earliest decades of the twentieth century, Homewood was in the midst of a demographic change by the time Howze and her family moved there. Due to the mid-1950s construction of Civic Arena in the Lower Hill District, city and county officials displaced thousands of low-income, majority-black Lower Hill District residents. Pittsburgh’s urban redevelopment program relocated the residents to Homewood. As a result, Homewood’s black residents comprised nearly 70% of the total neighborhood population by 1960, up from 22% in 1950. Moreover, in the same decade, the overall population decreased from 34,355 to 30,523 in

¹²¹ Howze, interview.

¹²² Howze, interview.

the face of white, middle-class outmigration. The decades following the watershed year of 1968 witnessed a steady decline of Homewood's business district as well as its overall population. The outmigration was related to uprisings occurring in the aftermath of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination and middle-class African-American flight to nearby neighborhoods as a result of the Fair Housing Act.¹²³

Howze resided in the Homewood area from 1965-1967, when she was an upperclassman at East Avenue High School. In Homewood, she became involved with various community organizations and projects, including East Avenue's Student Council and the school's Human Relations Committee.¹²⁴ She recounted the synergy between returning university students and community activists as one element producing some of the Homewood institutions she joined. Local students left for college and returned to Pittsburgh desiring to start the kinds of black cultural institutions they had seen elsewhere. One result was Together Inc., an organization of young African Americans, which was noted in the press for its contributions to the community's economic and cultural development. Together Inc.'s ventures included the *Harambee* Bookstore and the annual Homewood-Brushton-area *Harambee* Black Arts Festival.¹²⁵ A similar literacy hub to those Fisher cited, the bookstore offered: donated books and other reading materials for such populations as imprisoned African Americans; classes and lectures; space for meetings and events such as fundraisers, plays, music, dancing, and poetry readings by Black Arts Movement

¹²³ Allegheny County Department of Human Services, *Homewood: A Community Profile*, Pennsylvania, 2010, 4-5; "Public Auditorium Authority Members Sworn in Tuesday: They Will Set Stage for Part of Lower Hill Development; New Homes Must Be Found for Many Residents of District; Housing Authority to Help with This Task," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 10, 1954, 13.

¹²⁴ East Avenue High School Year Book, 1967, 47.

¹²⁵ "F.A.T. Honors Guardians, Together," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 15, 1969, 3.

luminaries like Sonia Sanchez.¹²⁶ The *Harambee* Black Arts Festival began in 1967 and its initial phase lasted through the early 1970s. Cited as the third largest of its kind in the country, the festival was hailed for reflecting “the growth and manner of expression of black identity.”¹²⁷ Howze lived in politically and culturally-active neighborhoods in the highly-charged decade of the sixties. Her narrative reflected the ethos that entering Pittsburgh CAP was an extension of her community work and personal affiliations during a historical moment.

Although the exact details about how she initially became a member of Pittsburgh CAP have faded from memory and she expressed a belief that her association with the group just “evolved,” Tamanika Howze recalls joining on invitation from the group’s leader, Sala Udin (formerly Samuel Howze).¹²⁸ Activists established CAP in her hometown in addition to some 25 other urban centers with large black populations. The groups were formed based on a framework developed in Atlanta and honed at later regional meetings held between 1970 and 1972. The Congress of African People attracted local groups to an expansive national network, within which Pittsburgh CAP was a connected cadre organization.¹²⁹ *Kasisi* Sala Udin or Sala Udin Saif Salaam (henceforth Udin) was the local chairman.

¹²⁶ Mattie Trent, “East Area Chatter,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 14, 1971, 21; *Harambee* Bookstore is mentioned in Special Agent in Charge, Pittsburgh to Director, FBI, memorandum, 24 March 1971, in FBI COINTELPRO Surveillance Files for February-May 1971, FBI Files on Black Extremist Organizations, Part 1: COINTELPRO Files on Black Hate Groups and Investigation of Deacons for Defense and Justice, ProQuest History Vault: Black Freedom Struggle in the 20th Century (Folder: 101094-006-0848); Display Ad 28, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 21, 1970, 15; “Inmate Sets Record Straight on Black Mood Article about Pen,” Reader’s Forum, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 17, 1970, 9; Fisher, “Earning Dual Degrees,” 83.

¹²⁷ Andre Edwin, “Harambee Arts Festival Returns,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 27, 1985, 3; “Awakening of the Harambee Legacy,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, City Edition, August 17, 2011, B5; “Black Arts Festival Scheduled,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 10, 1971, 2; Trent, “East Area Chatter.”

¹²⁸ Howze, interview.

¹²⁹ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 168; Simanga, “The Congress of African People,” 113; Ron Daniels, “Toward a Congress of African People,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, October 30, 1999, 5.

Howze recalls that her initial job in CAP was taking notes. Remembering the group's strictly-defined gender roles, she said female foot soldiers usually did the secretarial work while rank-and-file men performed such duties as passing out leaflets and hanging posters. Howze stated, "I can't remember what committees I was on but I do remember that there was a division of roles, very distinctive and, of course, the men were in the leadership and we [women] were more in the subservient roles even though we did a lot of the work," she continued.¹³⁰

Tamanika (Bruwana Mundi) Howze eventually married Sala Udin. The two exchanged wedding vows in a *Kawaida*-styled *Arusi*, which *Imamu* Baraka officiated on July 7, 1973.¹³¹ A *Courier* article published two weeks after the *Arusi* detailed the event, painting a vivid picture of the strictly-defined *Kawaida* gender roles, which were common during CAP's early years. Not unlike conservative, mainstream American weddings, gender difference was inscribed in many details including the couple's clothing. Instead of a white gown of the European tradition, the bride was attired in a richly-embroidered, bright, flowing, African-styled gown in the *Kawaida*-inspired *Arusi*. The outfit was topped with a *gele* head wrap fashioned from long pieces of cloth, skillfully tucked and tied to form a high crown. In contrast, the groom wore the austere Nyerere nationalist dress suit consisting of a black, button-down, collarless jacket and matching slacks.¹³²

¹³⁰ Howze, interview.

¹³¹ Tom Stokes, "Arusi! East Afrikan Wedding Rites Vibrate to the Beat of Drums," Willa's Women's Whirl, "*New Pittsburgh Courier*," July 21, 1973, 9; Tamanika Howze was also known as Bruwani Mundi, Tamanika Mundi, and Tamanika Salaam. Sala Udin Saif Salaam, "Afrikan View," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 7, 1973, 7.

¹³² Like *lapas*, this author asserts that the *gele* (a Yoruba term for a woman's head wrap) was a symbol "Afrikan womanhood" with longstanding religious, aesthetic, and utilitarian traditions throughout Africa and the diaspora. It became a popular accessory in black cultural-nationalist circles in the U.S.A. during the 1960s and experienced a resurgence in the 1990s. Also known as the "Mwalimu suit," this men's outfit was for "discerning nationalists" of the day. It was initially designed and worn by Julius Nyerere, first president of Tanzania, a newly-independent African nation. In addition to wearing the outfits as a fashion statement, men in CAP viewed the suits as a cultural expression of their attachment to African heritage and traditions but also a political statement about self-determination, black-nationalist unity, and transnational solidarity. Philipp Dorestal, *Style Politics: Mode, Geschlecht und Schwarzsein in den USA, 1943-1975* (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2012), 232-233.

In his sermon for the couple, the *imamu* urged that the groom should be the head of his household, providing “emotional, economic, and physical security” for his wife and children. The bride was reminded to be “humble and loving, appreciative and resourceful, faithful, respectful, and understanding” toward her husband. She was also urged to inspire him. Finally, the *imamu* reminded the two of the complementarity concept. “Although you Sala Udin, are to lead and you, Tamanika, are to follow, there is no superior or inferior one. You are both complementary,” *Imamu* Baraka stated.¹³³

One recurring appraisal of complementarity in the oral narratives for this dissertation and in the literature critiqued the contradiction between the ideal and praxis. On its face, complementarity suggested equality without sameness; nevertheless, the theory often realistically bolstered rigid gender roles and fostered practices of gender inequity. Pittsburgh CAP stood as an example. The organization was “top-heavy” with male leaders and populated with female “followers.” Additionally, in many *Kawaida*-influenced organizations, the women were expected to work hard but also to physically display submissiveness with a *salimu*, which involved the act of folding their arms across their chests and bowing when greeting men.¹³⁴ In short, *Kawaida* leaders’ and advocates’ words and deeds in relation to complementarity often meant two different things.

¹³³ Stokes, “Arusi!”

¹³⁴ Tamanika Howze discussed how female members were expected to be submissive and how they folded their arms across their chests when walking past the organization’s leader. She also recalled that Pittsburgh CAP was top-heavy with men holding leadership posts. Howze, interview; Amiri Baraka described a similar practice in which he observed women in the Us Organization crossing their arms on their breasts and bowing slightly when Karenga passed them. Baraka called this act of submission, “an Afro-American adaptation of West African feudalism.” Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 254; E. Frances White opined that complementarity and extended family forms have continued “to work against the liberation of black women.” White, “Africa on My Mind,” 75.

The *Arusi* did not solely reflect unequal gender roles in *Kawaida*-influenced, cultural-nationalist organizations like Pittsburgh CAP. The ceremony also suggested Howze and Udin's rootedness in the local community. The couple married in the Hill District, foregoing wedding invitations for an article in the *New Pittsburgh Courier*. Udin wrote "Afrikan View," a regular column generally meant to reflect the ideas of Pittsburgh CAP members and which often promulgated Baraka's and Karenga's messages. In the article dedicated to his marital ceremony, Udin wrote, "According to *Kawaida* customs, wedding invitations are not sent because they would serve to exclude all those who did not receive one. We wish to be inclusive, not exclusive and, therefore, the whole Black community of Pittsburgh is invited to attend." Additionally, outlining the purpose of the union according to *Kawaida* philosophy, Udin wrote, "To Nationalists a stable Afrikan Family is the cornerstone of a stable Afrikan community, nation and race."¹³⁵ It is no wonder that the couple's family expanded. They welcomed three sons into the world.¹³⁶

Besides being a wife and mother, Tamanika (Bruwana Mundi) was a stalwart community advocate. Even before her marriage to Udin, she was an award-winning activist in her own right. For instance, the local New Image NAACP recognized her as one of two CAP members providing "outstanding service" to the black community in 1972.¹³⁷ In her oral narrative, Howze characterized herself and her peers as women who "held it down." That is, they navigated the

¹³⁵ Udin, "Afrikan View," July 7, 1973; Sala Udin Saif Salaam, "Afrikan View," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 19, 1974, 7.

¹³⁶ Howze, interview; The couple eventually divorced and lost one son to gun violence. Ervin Dyer, "Udin Talks about Slain Son at Neighborhood Forum," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 4, 2005, accessed July 23, 2015, <http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2005/11/04/Udin-talks-about-slain-son-at-neighborhood-forum/stories/200511040158>.

¹³⁷ "'Spiritual Revolution of the Mind' Launched," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, May 27, 1972, 10.

competing demands of partnering and parenting with careers, community work, and service to CAP. They did so with consistency and composure and were given little formal recognition of their indispensable roles in the organization.¹³⁸ News articles confirmed Howze's assessment, reporting that she was part of the Hill Mental Health Team of the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic. There she was a social worker based in a Hill District psychiatric institute satellite office. Along with performing her wifely duties and work in CAP, she and her team members assisted the local population through such activities as program and business development, awareness raising, and navigating the process of accessing social services.¹³⁹

Despite the accolades and activities, Howze described herself as a behind-the-scenes worker and a "soldier" as opposed to a leader.¹⁴⁰ This characterization is no surprise given the emphasis placed on masculine leadership models in *Kawaida*-influenced organizations. Females were expected to support and inspire in auxiliary roles but not necessarily to be visible, official, top-level organizational leaders according to *Kawaida* philosophy as well as some of the more conservative elements of American society.¹⁴¹ *Kawaida*-influenced organizations additionally upheld the idea that *kazi* was one of the "blackest" and most important of all Pan-African nationalist values. According to *Kawaida* philosophy, "blackness" was not just skin color but

¹³⁸ Howze, interview.

¹³⁹ "Mental Health Team Conducts Drug Seminars to Better Understand Addicts," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 29, 1972; "Hill Mental Health Team Created to Serve Blacks," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 28, 1973, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Howze, interview; Howze, personal communication; Amina Baraka also described the women in CFUN as disciplined "soldiers," stating that they usually woke at 6 a.m. for meetings, performed secretarial work, worked in the communal kitchen, led, cleaned, and organized umuzis or dwellings for communal living, ran independent and supplementary educational institutions and childcare facilities, participated in demonstrations, and performed many other tasks. Their work regularly ended after midnight. Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

¹⁴¹ Halisi and Mtume, eds., *The Quotable Karenga*, 20-21; Mumininas, *Mwanamke Mwananchi*, 4-8; E. Frances White, "Africa on My Mind" 76-77.

was also determined by one's culture and consciousness. Thus, *Kawaida* advocates often viewed hard work as fundamental to both black identity and the nation-building process.¹⁴²

Accordingly, in her self-narrative, Howze described a feeling of exhaustion during her time in CAP.¹⁴³ The ten or so Pittsburgh members convened weekly 10:00 a.m. meetings on Sundays at a Hill-District community center. The small group also sponsored local Kwanzaa festivities and worked to educate the community about the principles and practices of the holiday.¹⁴⁴ Howze labored to assist the organization reach its overall aims, which involved employing *Kawaida* as a tool to achieve the lofty goal of organizing African Americans into a cohesive and thriving "national community." She and fellow members worked on the nation-building process at the level of developing institutions aimed at serving black people's basic needs. Members hoped the African-American population could organize and improve the quality of their lives through such groups. Pittsburgh CAP sought to create and develop institutions in three specific areas: politics, economics, and education.¹⁴⁵

The Pittsburgh Congress of African People participated in various political efforts from its inception. Howze stated the chapter initially emphasized cultural nationalism, and that it

¹⁴² According to Rickford, Pan-African nationalists viewed kazi as both a "moral commitment" and "sustained physical exertion." Rickford, "Kazi is the Blackest of All" 99.

¹⁴³ "Africans to Meet," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 5, 1972, 20; According to an advertisement, the Allegheny Black Political Convention carried the theme, "Political Freedom thru Kazi (Work)." Pittsburgh CAP was involved with the Allegheny Black Political Assembly. Display Ad 24, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 29, 1972, 19; Tamanika Howze was not alone in expressing such a sense of fatigue. Tayari kwa Salaam of Ahidiana shared a similar sentiment in her interview with the author. Tayari kwa Salaam, interview; The importance of *kazi*, particularly in supporting claims of women's organizational indispensability and wide-ranging work duties, was exemplified in "Kazi Like You Mean It," a section of *The EAST Sisterhood*, 7-8.

¹⁴⁴ The number of no more than ten members came from Howze, interview; Cheo Elimu to Imamu Amiri Baraka, memo, December 30, 1970, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Atlanta, GA; Toki Schalk Johnson, "Black Group Holds Feast of Kwanza," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 9, 1971, 24; "Blacks Observe Kwanza to Cite Achievements," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 23, 1972, 2; Sala Udin Saif Salaam, Afrikan View, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 29, 1973, 7.

¹⁴⁵ Udin, "Afrikan View," January 19, 1974.

became more politically-focused over time.¹⁴⁶ Pittsburgh CAP had the goal of employing a united front strategy to help form a grassroots, independent, African-American political party in an effort to gain control of local, majority-black areas and as one aspect of the larger nation-building project.¹⁴⁷ In 1972 the group hoped the newly-formed Allegheny County Black Political Assembly (ACBPA), an arm of the National Black Political Convention, would be a good starting point for building a third party. As a result, Pittsburgh CAP members participated in such activities as organizing voter education projects and registration drives. Additionally, they worked with the ACBPA to hold local, county-wide, and regional conferences and conventions during the early to mid-1970s.¹⁴⁸ Pittsburgh CAP members also participated in the Western Pennsylvania Black Political Assembly, of which ACBPA was a branch. Members involved themselves in related activities aimed at “build[ing] a political power base” in Pittsburgh while Howze was affiliated with CAP. Along with Sala Udin, Tamanika Howze was part of a

¹⁴⁶ Cheo Elimu to Imamu Amiri Baraka, memo, December 30, 1970, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Atlanta, GA; Howze, interview.

¹⁴⁷ A united front is a coalition formed to oppose a force posing a problem for all constituents. The united front strategy originated in the 1920s Chinese Communist Party and its collaboration with the Nationalist Party to defeat regional warlords. Herbert S. Yee, “The Three World Theory and Post-Mao China’s Global Strategy,” *International Affairs* 59, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 240; Simanga outlined the origins of the Congress of African People’s united front strategy, tracing it back to Malcolm X’s call for “a united front of black people regardless of ideology, geography, religion, or affiliation.” Simanga also explained that CAP’s united front endeavors from 1970-1975 were its most important work because advocates helped unify a fragmented struggle into a potent political force. Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 93-95.

¹⁴⁸ Sala Udin Saif Salaam, “Afrikan View,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 6, 1973, 7, January 27, 1973, 7, and June 1, 1974, 8; The author of one article recognized that, though the participation of black officials was lower than the previous year, CAP as the dominant force in the well-organized 1973 Western Pennsylvania Black Political Convention. The author emphasized the theme was, “Kazi (work) is the blackest of all.” “The Game of Politics is Work,” *POLITI GO ROUND*, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 10, 1973, 1& 4; “Althea Fonville, “Blacks Need Third Party,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 19, 1975, 1; Tom Stokes, “Black Politicos Adopt 12- Pt. Platform at Confab,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 5, 1972, 1.

controversial National Black Assembly (NBA) elected delegation representing Allegheny County. She was seated at the 1975 NBA meeting in the District of Columbia.¹⁴⁹

Although CAP's political activities have begun to fade from Howze's memory, she vividly recalled that she was most engaged in the organization's education projects. Besides working with Black Student Unions and teachers' organizations, the Pittsburgh group operated a supplementary educational institution or what Howze termed a "liberation school." According to her narrative, the venture began in her home. A news article aimed at alerting the city's black community about the educational institution announced its grand opening as African Free School in November 1973. The school was slated to offer Saturday classes from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. to educate community members on such topics as health and provided physical fitness and discipline-related activities such as "drill." Focusing on developing a culturally-relevant curriculum devoid of what advocates viewed as the hegemonic "hidden curriculum," administrators also hoped to inculcate a "healthy Black personality" in students by teaching "Afrikan values."¹⁵⁰ In the decades following CAP's dissolution, Howze remained active in Pittsburgh, particularly focusing on developing and maintaining local Freedom Schools.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Howze, interview; "Action of Assembly Widens Gap Between Local Udin, Carter Factions," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, City Edition, May 3, 1975, 1; Sala Udin Saif Salaam, "Afrikan View," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, March 10, 1973, 7; "New Date Set for Parley," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 22, 1975, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Howze, interview; Udin, "Afrikan View," January 19, 1974; "Free School," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November, 3, 1973, 28.

¹⁵¹ Like the Black-Power-era Communiversity, Freedom Schools were modeled on the Civil Rights Movement institutions "Organizers Schedule Black Political Action Forum," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 27, 1983, A3; Andre Edwin, "Harambee Arts Festival Returns," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 27, 1985, 3; Sonya M. Haynes, "Hill House Program Stresses Education: At Kaufman Center," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, October 8, 1994, A-1; Louis Kendrick, "To Tell the Truth Frogs Financial Support Must Be Duplicated," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 25, 2004, A7; The types of Freedom Schools Howze worked with were first developed by the Children's Defense Fund in 1988. Like the Freedom Schools of the early 1960s, they had the responsibility of educating whole families; however, the more recently-formed institutions served a racially- and ethnically-diverse student body, including Latinos. Charles N. Brown, "Pittsburgh Establishes Freedom Schools," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 9, 2002, A1.

Pittsburgh CAP's work might have been rooted in local concerns but members agitated, educated, and organized around global issues as well. For example, after Amilcar Cabral's assassination in January 1973, a news article reflected that Pittsburgh CAP demonstrated against U.S. companies, which continued to conduct business as usual with imperialist forces in countries struggling to throw off the yoke of colonialism. In concert with demonstrators in cities like Newark, New York, and Philadelphia, 25-30 CAP-affiliated men and women protested downtown in front of the Steel City's Gulf Building, "to show . . . sympathy and solidarity with the African liberation movements and the African liberation freedom fighters."¹⁵²

Pittsburgh CAP was also involved with the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). In 1972, CAP members played important roles in helping to establish the national ALSC.¹⁵³ Locally they convened a work-group, which sponsored African Liberation Week celebrations in the city. The gatherings, scheduled around African Liberation Day demonstrations, included activities like movies, music, and art, and were meant to build support for continental African independence struggles. Photographs of a press conference held in Pittsburgh during the ALD commemorations of May 19-29, 1973 pictured a group of men, including The East's Jitu Weusi. They were seated behind a table around Udin, who spoke into a microphone. Such images reinforce the idea that CAP's formally-recognized leadership was still male-dominated at the time.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² "Blacks Demonstrate Against Gulf Policy," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 3, 1973, 1 & 5; Sala Udin Saif Salaam, "Afrikan View," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 3, 1973, 7.

¹⁵³ Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 6 & 68.

¹⁵⁴ Udin, *Afrikan View*, May 19, 1973; Group portrait of Ewari "Ed" Ellis, Roland Hayes, Sala Udin Saif Salaam (Sam Howze), Jitu Weusi, and Reverend Rosamund Kay, seated for press conference, with Tim Stevens and Father August "Gus" Taylor seated in back, during African Liberation Week, May-June 1973, 2001.35.4672, Teenie Harris Archive, Carnegie Museum of Art, accessed August 10, 2014, <http://teenie.cmoa.org/>.

By 1974, CAP began to openly embrace socialism and this turn was reflected in the Pittsburgh branch.¹⁵⁵ While recalling events of the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania recapped conference sessions covering topics from race and class to the current state of liberation in Africa and the diaspora; local CAP members reportedly theorized that the main problem facing African-descended populations was “imperialism versus the people.” As a result, the chapter proposed the idea that socialism was the only feasible method for overcoming the marginalized and exploited status of “third-world” people in Africa, the Caribbean, and the U.S.¹⁵⁶

CAP’s growing socialism was also reflected in reports of the Pittsburgh branch’s activism around the “Woman Question.” The group held a women’s seminar, unity dinner, parade, and political rally as part of its Afrikan Liberation Month activities in May 1974. Amina Baraka was the keynote speaker.¹⁵⁷ An earnest and authoritative leader in CAP who contributed to its ideological and material evolution, Amina served as the only female on CAP’s Executive Council. As such, she stood alone on the governing body as a proponent of improving women’s roles within the organization. It was because of her staunch advocacy that the 1974 African Women’s Conference took place in Newark.¹⁵⁸

The thrust for gender equality in CAP did not only emanate from the top of the organization but, according to Howze’s account, some of the rank-and-file female advocates’

¹⁵⁵ Simanga asserted that this period of CAP’s development was included a turn to socialism, which was expressed through “African revolutionary intellectuals primarily and other Third World revolutionaries secondarily.” Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 101.

¹⁵⁶ BAS Sponsors Report on Pan-African Meet, “*New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 16, 1974, 28.

¹⁵⁷ “Afrikan View,” June 1, 1974, 8.

¹⁵⁸ Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 83-84.

demands for more egalitarian gender roles grew with the organization's increasingly socialistic focus. Expressing appreciation for those women in the group who refused to remain silent on the issue of women's inequality, Howze said, "I was glad that the sisters would speak up." She explained that, though some remained submissive, many spoke out about the fact that the organizational structure needed to change because of what she deemed a disproportionate number of male leaders, some of whom should have helped with the organization's grunt work. "When we shifted to socialism is when it really, really changed in looking at things based on gender," Howze recollected. Elaborating, she talked about a female member who stood up for greater assistance with routine tasks and child-rearing responsibilities at home. Howze also gave an example of how women agitated for organizational change in terms of responsibilities for communal, organizational day care and cooking in Pittsburgh CAP. "Before it was just the women who were in child care and so we started changing that. The brothers, they had a duty in child care. They had a duty in the kitchen, that sort of thing." Stressing that CAP's turn toward socialism in part drove these changes, she said, "It changed then but it wasn't under *Kawaida* at all." Adding an anecdote about her use of personal agency, Howze said, "I remember [at] times developing the schedules, so I made sure to schedule the brothers in childcare, schedule them in the kitchen, that sort of thing."¹⁵⁹

Aside from struggling with issues of gender inequality in their homes and organization, Congress of African People advocates publicly kicked off the year 1975 with the "Woman Question" as a guiding theme for broader community initiatives.¹⁶⁰ In his "African View"

¹⁵⁹ Howze, interview; This author notes that Pittsburgh CAP's small size may also have played a role in terms of necessitating female involvement on various levels within the group as well as impacting their ability to wield power.

¹⁶⁰ Sala Udin, "Black Women's United Front," *Serve the People*, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 25, 1975, 20.

column that year, Udin stressed that, like racism, women's rights were of major concern to people struggling for black liberation as well as those who fought for all oppressed people's freedom and equality. Also like racial discrimination, he wrote that women's issues were a byproduct of "Monopoly Capitalism."¹⁶¹ To work on combatting these interlocking ills, CAP convened the first national Black Women's United Front meeting during the month of January in Detroit. Bringing the group under the banner of women's rights, anticapitalism, anti-imperialism, and antiracism with such groups as the All African People's Revolutionary Party, National Welfare Rights Organization, Black Workers Congress, Pan Afrikan Students of America, Youth Organization of Black Unity, and the Ethiopian Students Organization. The overall thrust of the broad coalition was improving the conditions of black and Third-World women while also forwarding the liberation struggle.¹⁶² The Black Women's United Front developed from the conference.

As an individual Pittsburgh CAP member, Tamanika Howze engaged her community in terms of similar causes. A reading of *Courier* articles reveals Howze's public advocacy, particularly for women's issues, grew within the context of CAP's expanded focus on multiple forms of oppression. For instance, a newspaper journalist cited Howze as a "women's liberation activist" in the series, "Are Black Women for or Against Women's Lib?" Additionally, the writer quoted Howze's views on the nature of the black women's liberation movement.

Communicating the idea that her women's rights sensibilities evolved within the context of the *Kawaida*-influenced Congress of African People as the organization's ideology grew more

¹⁶¹ Monopoly capitalism is a for-profit economic system in which a few private owners, rather than the state, control trade and industry.

¹⁶² Udin, "Black Women's United Front," 20; Althea Fonville, "Groundwork Laid for a Black Women's UF," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 22, 1975, 4.

socialistic, Howze stated, “The Black women’s liberation movement is inside and runs parallel to the Black liberation struggle. Racism and sexism are born out of capitalism, as both have been used to psychologically and thus ‘existentially’ maintain and further develop capitalism.” The reporter continued, writing that Howze said rich and powerful white males occupied the top positions in capitalistic societies and, thus, exploited poor white men, people of color, and all women, as they were forced into lower positions on the socioeconomic ladder.¹⁶³ Howze further revealed the idea in her self-narrative that she came to her position on women’s rights through Black Freedom Struggle activism. She explained, “I don’t subscribe to traditional feminism because traditional feminism is white-oriented. It’s not designed for us.” Howze instead preferred the womanist designation.¹⁶⁴

Another early 1975 article reported Tamanika Howze’s emerging views on women’s rights. A group of concerned Pittsburgh citizens sponsored a Free Joan Little rally. The event was meant to bring attention to the plight of the imprisoned, poverty-stricken, young black woman accused of murdering the much older, white prison guard, Clarence Alligood in 1974. The petite and soft-spoken Little testified that she stabbed the brawny jailer in self-defense as he sexually assaulted her in a North Carolina cell. In and out of trouble with the law since she was a youth, Little was being detained on charges of breaking and entering when the rape occurred. Having escaped after managing to get hold of the icepick Alligood wielded as he sexually assaulted her, North Carolina authorities declared Little an outlaw and issued a “shoot on sight” order. Despite the fact that another guard had discovered Alligood with his pants down and a

¹⁶³ Althea Fonville, “Are Black Women for or Against Women’s Lib?”, *News Pittsburgh Courier*, January 18, 1975, 5.

¹⁶⁴ Howze, interview.

trail of semen on his leg, reporters and prosecutors framed the incident as the vicious murder of a dutiful public servant by a promiscuous, black femme fatale. After Little surrendered, a grand jury handed down a first-degree murder indictment. Little faced the death penalty. Many, including advocates in *Kawaida*-influenced organizations, rallied to her cause.¹⁶⁵ Historian Genna Rae McNeil described the movement supporting Little's case as an example of the "effective mobilization of progressive social organizations, networks of activists, and movements for justice." Moreover, she pointed out that Little's ordeal was also a moment for women to forge a "sisterhood" across racial and class lines.¹⁶⁶

It was in this environment that Howze vocally defended Little's right to self-defense at a Pittsburgh community event. Howze emphasized that Little had the right to protect herself, not only as a poor black person but specifically as a woman. Going on record as a CAP member, Howze told a *Courier* reporter, "In the state of North Carolina, committing rape is punishable by death also." She declared, "Acting out of self-defense, [Joan Little] was left no other alternative but to fight against an aggressor who was bent on forcibly entering her body."¹⁶⁷ Little's freedom depended on the ability of activists like Howze. They not only agitated in Little's defense, but

¹⁶⁵ Joan Little's name is alternately spelled and pronounced "JoAnn" and "Joanne." Genna Rae McNeil, "Joanne is You and Joanne is Me," in *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, eds. Betty Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 259-260, 263, & 274-275; Danielle L. McGuire, "Power to the Ice Pick!", in *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 202-203, 208-212, 214-215, and 223-224; The New Jersey Black Women's United Front sponsored a fundraiser in support of Joan Little's defense in April 1975. "B.W.U.F.," *Unity and Struggle*, April 1975, 10; After her subsequent arrest pertaining to the original breaking and entering charges, the statement "Free Joan Little" was emblazoned on the pages of *Unity and Struggle*, June 1978, 11 & July 1978, 12; "Legal Updates," *Off Our Backs: A Women's News Journal* 8 no. 10 (November 1978): 3; Karenga wrote a plea for Little's acquittal. Maulana Ron Karenga, "In Defense of Sis. Joanne: For Ourselves and History," *The Black Scholar* 6 no. 10 (July-August 1975): 37-42.

¹⁶⁶ McNeil, "Joanne is You," 267.

¹⁶⁷ Althea Fonville, "Pittsburghers Rally Support for North Carolina Woman," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 8, 1975, A1.

they also educated people about the multiple, overlapping forms of oppression she faced. The courage of individuals like Howze, who worked within organizations like CAP, was key in assisting Little's defense to secure a 1975 acquittal.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, Woodard points out that CAP women's consciousness raising around the topic of black females' oppression in the realms of race, class, and gender impacted the philosophies of prominent Pan-African cultural-nationalist leaders such as Amiri Baraka and Maulana Karenga, who had begun to philosophically repudiate male chauvinism and who framed Little's act of resistance within the same vein as the larger struggle for human dignity and rights.¹⁶⁹

It is notable that 1975, the year of the "Woman Question," with its flurry of activism related to the Little case marked the first time readers of the *Courier* heard Howze articulate her own position on any cause. That she addressed women's rights causes within the context of the Black Liberation Struggle spoke volumes about the process of female, cultural-nationalists' development of the agency to articulate their own positions and emphasize women's rights within masculinist, *Kawaida*-influenced groups in general and CAP in particular. Though some may view this as further evidence that black women lagged behind their white counterparts in terms of women's rights advocacy, historian Danielle McGuire emphasized that the women involved with the Free Joan Little Movement were part of a decades-old tradition of black females' testimony and protest against the sexual abuse to which white males subjected them.¹⁷⁰ Marginalized in narratives of the women's rights struggle and often essentialized in the record because of their initially-subservient roles in *Kawaida*-influenced organizations, female

¹⁶⁸ McNeil, "Joanne is You," 260.

¹⁶⁹ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 183; Karenga, "In Defense of Sis. Joanne": 37-42.

¹⁷⁰ McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, xix.

advocates in *Kawaida*-influenced groups have not received enough attention in terms of their support for such women's rights causes as the Free Joan Little Movement.

Even when telling her own story, Tamanika Howze declined to characterize herself as a leader in Pittsburgh CAP. In particular, she cited the fact that wives of male CAP leaders were charged with leadership responsibilities as a matter of course. Nevertheless, *Courier* journalists reported that Howze headed the local Black Women's United Front (BWUF) and publicly agitated, educated, and organized for women in various ways.¹⁷¹ The BWUF arranged employment seminars, discussing important issues, and offering resources that exposed neighborhood women to training and job opportunities.¹⁷² BWUF members also helped connect the women with social services organizations, hoping to improve conditions in the community. They conducted a survey of females on public assistance to determine the challenges they faced in terms of accessing services. The BWUF sponsored a forum to educate women about accessing much-needed welfare resources and offered ideas for creating businesses. As the BWUF had in other instances, the group also planned to charter shuttle buses so interested parties could attend national meetings.¹⁷³

In addition to agitating and educating around women's rights, Howze organized activities emphasizing the struggle for women's democratic rights and working-class solidarity across racial lines as leader of Pittsburgh CAP's BWUF. She told the press, "We feel the conditions now call for a multi-national united struggle for the democratic rights of women, oppressed

¹⁷¹ Althea Fonville, "Black Women's UF to Aid the Community," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 20, 1975, 1.

¹⁷² "Black Women Slate Forum," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, September 6, 1975, 8.

¹⁷³ Fonville, "Black Women's UF to Aid the Community."; "Black Women's United Front Plans Conference," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 28, 1976, 25.

nationalities and the whole of the working class.”¹⁷⁴ Additionally, Howze espoused that the aim of the BWUF was resisting “capitalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism.” As an expression of such aims, the group organized a February 1976 conference, titled “Women Unite to Fight Back.” The summit featured the film, “Space to Be Me,” and a multicultural panel of women. Both events highlighted the challenges of working-class females in capitalist societies. The local “Women Fight Back” summit was a precursor to the national branch’s BWUF Conference and International Women’s Day demonstration in March, which CAP co-sponsored with the October League.¹⁷⁵ The CAP Pittsburgh branch dissolved later in 1976 according to Howze. She said the “movement pretty much stopped . . . because we had an enormous task in front of us, enormous.” In the process of undertaking the tremendous task of struggling for black self-determination, female advocates like Howze stood up for women’s rights.

The illustrations presented in this chapter were drawn from self-narratives collected for this dissertation and reflect the motivations of women who joined *Kawaida*-influenced organizations because of their community concerns or through their neighborhood involvement. They reflect the idea that women performed integral work in such areas as political organizing, consciousness raising, direct action, education, print media, and nation building via public institutions as well as household development. They also navigated and challenged confining gender constructs both internal and external to their organizations. In particular, the concept of *kazi* provided the foundation for developing women’s rights activism and females’ skills and leadership abilities, whether or not such activities were formally acknowledged.

¹⁷⁴ “Black Women’s United Front Forms Feb. 29,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 28, 1976, 10.

¹⁷⁵ “Black Women’s United Front Forms Feb. 29,” 10; “Black Women’s United Front Plans Conference,” 25.

7 “TAIFA SAA MEANS NATION TIME”: WOMEN, *KAWAIDA*-INFLUENCED, NATIONLIST INSTITUTION BUILDING, AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT¹

The driving, staccato words of Amiri Baraka’s poem “It’s Nation Time” delivered a militant ode to “pulsating positive magnetism,” “black genius,” “unity,” and self-determination in service of nation building.² Similarly vigorous and definitive, The East Organization’s Martha Bright described nation building in her oral history narrative. To her, “nation time” or *taifa saa*, meant institutional and program development in marginalized communities. The majority of the neighborhood’s 1,200 businesses were unprofitable in Bed-Stuy, where Bright was active. Moreover, those enterprises such as A&P Supermarket, one of the largest grocery store chains in the United States at the time, tended to funnel profits away from the community. The conglomerate had a record of operating in majority-minority neighborhoods but rarely hiring African Americans, keeping them in menial positions, or declining to do business with black vendors.³ In such contexts, the Pan-African cultural-nationalist concepts of *taifa saa* and *ujamaa* encouraged advocates to help build and maintain self-help entrepreneurial ventures, community programs, and mutual aid groups. These entities focused on generating revenue for Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations, creating jobs, and bolstering the physical and mental health of advocates and the broader neighborhoods in which they existed.

In the cases where businesses operated, advocates’ models were based on what is now understood as social entrepreneurship, rather than extractive capitalism. That is, the businesses

¹ The quote “taifa saa, nation time” was taken from Martha Bright’s longer statement, “It was a nation, taifa saa, nation time. . . . Any aspect of a nation that you could think of, we had at The East.” Bright, interview, 1 of 2, June 24, 2013.

² Amiri Baraka, “It’s Nation Time,” *It’s Nation Time* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1970), 21-22.

³ Manoni, *Bedford-Stuyvesant*, 25.

made community uplift and humanitarianism as their primary reason for existence. For instance, advocates in Us, CFUN, The East, and Ahidiana developed and maintained ventures such as boutiques, food cooperatives, kitchens and catering businesses, and women's collectives for the purpose of serving the community. On the other hand, extractive business owners obtained black and brown consumers' dollars, funneling resources toward themselves and their own communities with little or no reinvestment in the social and economic welfare of their customers.⁴ Amiri Baraka's call for nation building was welcome by many in such a context, yet it was expressed in such masculinist terms as "brothers strik[ing]" and "brothers tak[ing] over the school." Oral narratives, like Bright's, indicated women's central roles in nation building from initial planning and development to the daily maintenance of nationalist institutions and programs.⁵ Moreover, stories like those of the advocates involved in Ahidiana's sisterhood gatherings reflected the idea that certain female cultural nationalists actively shaped patriarchal views about nation building to support work, which they viewed as necessary to the well-being of local communities and integral to African Americans' future.

⁴ Specifically regarding A&P, a local newspaper article informed readers that The East's food co-op was available as a low-cost alternative for local patrons seeking to buy fresh foods during Operation Breadbasket's boycotts against the supermarket chain during the early 1970s. The co-op was touted as an example of *ujamaa* or cooperative economics. Operation Breadbasket operated from 1962 until 1972, was aimed at helping African Americans gain greater access to the American economy, and was spearheaded by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Big Black, "Around Our Way," *Black News* 1 no. 28 (February 7, 1971): 10; Breadbasket Maps A&P Confrontation," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 28, 1970, 3; Karin L. Stanford, "Reverend Jesse and the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition: Institutionalizing Economic Opportunity," in *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, eds. Ollie Johnson III and Karin L. Stanford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 152-157; For more information on the influence of Black Power as one of several transformations inspiring social entrepreneurship and other "insurgent consumer cultures" among young people during the 1960s and 1970s, see Joshua Clark Davis, "Consumer Liberation: Baby Boomers, Hip Businesses, and the Challenge to Mass Consumption, 1968-1983" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2013), 9.

⁵ Baraka, "It's Nation Time," 22; Bright, interview, 1 of 2; Simanga also pointed out that women in Newark CAP were key to the organization's businesses, which were an expression self-reliance and self-determination. Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82.

7.1 *Making Mavazi: Women's Roles in Clothing the Community*

Women were key to the functioning of Committee for a Unified Newark and East ventures, which were aspects of *taifa saa*, the organizations' nation-building efforts. One gendered project women undertook was constructing the kind of clothing that was so important to cultural-nationalist self-expression. Amina Baraka explained that through "the block associations that . . . women in the community [developed], we taught them to make African clothes." She continued, explaining that women helped produce various African-influenced clothing styles, including nationalist dress suits for men. In addition to viewing Nyerere or "Mwalimu" nationalist suits as sartorial and political statements, CAP leaders envisioned the manufacture and sale of the outfits as a business opportunity, not only for members, but for people in the neighborhoods that the various branches served. Amina Baraka explained, "This one woman, Ms. Slade, she made it into a business. She made clothes for the men in the organization. . . . You can get African clothes practically anywhere now but back in the day you couldn't. So, she made a business of it and she made what we called nationalist dress suits."⁶

Amina Baraka recounted how the dress suits came into fashion among black-nationalist men and, with her help, subsequently grew into a business venture for a woman in the neighborhood. She said, "The people in the community, they were smart." Amina explained that Amiri Baraka had visited Tanzania during Nyerere's presidency and the men were wearing distinctive suits. "When Amiri brought one back home, I took it apart and made patterns and I started making them myself." She reiterated that women like Ms. Slade began to earn money by producing the suits themselves.⁷

⁶ Philipp Dorestal, *Style Politics*, 233; Quotes are from Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

⁷ Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

Seeing Amiri Baraka don the Tanzanian dress suit, Amina said the brothers in CFUN would often exclaim, “Ooh, that’s a bad suit! I want to wear that. How do you get that?” Ms. Slade, who lived across the street from the organization, had learned to make dashikis from Amina and expressed interest in adding the two-piece men’s nationalist outfit to the repertoire of clothing she could produce. Amina Baraka recounted, “I just gave her my pattern and she started sewing suits. She was a working-class black woman and she had no other means except her husband working, so she found a way to earn money and to do something to serve the community in that sense because the brothers started wearing the national dress suits and she could make them very well. She had a pattern.”⁸

Women also played important roles in East businesses related to clothing production and sales. For example, Muslimah sewed the Nyerere nationalist dress suits for the East’s *Mavazi* boutique. *Mavazi* opened in 1971 and boasted African records, carvings, underwear, dashikis, dungarees, and ready-to-wear as well as custom-made clothing at reasonable prices. Although a male East member, Job Mashariki, was the store supervisor, women like Muslimah also devoted their time, skills, and energy to the organization.⁹ In other ventures, East women “did bookkeeping and clerical work, cleaning, selling and sewing, typesetting and traveling and lots and lots of teaching.”¹⁰ Tamisha Peterson summed up women’s efforts, her words suggesting

⁸ Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

⁹ *The EAST Sisterhood*, 7; Although the Mavazi store did not do well, women like Muslimah nevertheless contributed their labor to such ventures, which were part of a larger economic-nationalist effort to develop institutions that would help sustain the organization, the surrounding community, and the black nation within the U.S.A.; For more information about *Mavazi*’s offerings, see Konadu, *A View from the East*, 83-84; and *Mavazi* Clothing Co-op ad, *Black News*, 2 no. 4 (June 2, 1973): 37 and *Black News* 2 no. 12 (December 26, 1973): 14.

¹⁰ *The EAST Sisterhood* booklet included self-narratives from Martha Bright, Muslimah, Inuka, Olabisi, and Nassoma, all women who described their various tasks as East family members. Black and Angaza, *The EAST Sisterhood*, 7.

that *kazi* undergirded their work ethic. “We did a lot of the footwork, a lot of the office work, a lot of the basic stuff that wouldn’t get done, the big stuff,” she explained. Peterson lamented that she was not surprised that “we weren’t given . . . credit.” Illuminating the importance of women’s support networks in navigating their lives as female activists in the organization, she continued, “We took care of each other. We had our sisterhood meetings and we made a lot of decisions ourselves too on what we were going to do, which direction we were going to go. We handled some of our problems.” Reiterating a common theme in the narratives—that gender roles internal to the organization often mirrored those in the broader, patriarchal society. Peterson commented that female East members did “pretty much what women do in everyday life out here.”¹¹

7.2 *Food for Tradition and Life: Women’s Gender Roles, Food Activism, and Community*¹²

Historian Jennifer Jensen Wallach wrote about what she termed cultural-nationalist foodways that gained popularity during the second half of the 1960s.¹³ Wallach surmised that during the Civil Rights Movement, activists engaged food in a way that was “incidental rather than fundamental to the struggle”; however, with the rise of Black Power, politically-active African Americans came to regard food as a powerful cultural symbol worth examining. Wallach detailed the food-related activism of black nationalists, highlighting 1964 as a turning point in African-American discourses and practices in relationship to food. Wallach traced the gendered

¹¹ Peterson, interview, Part 2 of 2.

¹² The wording for the subtitle, “Food for Tradition and Life,” is from a Kununuana Co-op advertisement, which read “Food for Life, Shopping in Tradition.” *Black News*, 1 no. 37 (January 1972): 7.

¹³ Foodways encompass diet, culinary customs, and eating habits.

contours of black-nationalist foodways. She also argued that women's responsibility for cooking and serving food followed the gender roles established in the US Organization and were carried out in CFUN as well as The East. Wallach, thus, presented the beginning of a discussion about women's roles in what she called the "post-1964 culinary turn." Themes related to gender and foodways likewise surfaced in advocates' narratives. Notably, Wallach pointed out that cultural nationalists believed consuming a vegetarian or a whole-foods diet was an important part of maintaining personal wellness and insuring community vitality.¹⁴ Put another way, women occupied a central role in helping promote healthy habits within Pan-African nationalist organizations because of their gendered roles as cooks for family and community.

The process of asserting a separate black identity and value system among nationalists often involved making food an important expression of communal activism. Wallach theorized that construction of black-nationalist foodways was one way of reframing the relationship between African-descended people and the United States' nation-state. Moreover, Wallach explained that new food habits were at the center of Kwanzaa practices in many ways. Those included fasting and encouraging the consumption of foods with "African" origins, southern-styled cuisine, and those which reinforced the concept of continuities across the continent of Africa and the diaspora. "The earliest Kwanzaa observers operated under the assumption that food behavior was an important factor of identity construction," wrote Wallach.¹⁵

Because Kwanzaa was constructed as a harvest festival, foodways were central to its existence and iconography, and beginning in the late 1960s, Pan-African nationalists used food

¹⁴ Jennifer Jensen Wallach, "How to Eat to Live: Black Nationalism and the Post-1964 Culinary Turn," July 2, 2014, accessed January 7, 2015, <http://southernstudies.olemiss.edu/study-the-south/how-to-eat-to-live/>.

¹⁵ Jensen Wallach, "How to Eat to Live."

in two ways. Primarily, practices of food production and consumption constituted ways of performing what was considered “a Pan-African food identity”; they also promoted ideals about healthy living.¹⁶ The East’s Adeyemi Bandele reinforced this idea when he said advocates grappled with “the issues of worldwide struggles of people of African descent” and “also addressed the issues of diet and nutrition.”¹⁷

As Wallach pointed out, East advocates created and perpetuated Pan-African culinary traditions. They encouraged the purchase and preparation of “good Afrikan food” for Kwanzaa feasts or *karamus*.¹⁸ The importance of assisting community members with what advocates deemed healthy eating practices was evident according to the discourse in interviews as well as in the *Black News* circular. For example, East member Basir Mchawi wrote that the process of assisting an individual to switch from celebrating Christmas to embracing Kwanzaa was similar to converting them from meat-eating to providing them with “all the protein, vitamins, calories and minerals necessary for proper health” as a vegetarian.¹⁹ As displayed on the pages of *Black News*, books on “diet, nutrition, and exercise” were presented as “perfect” Kwanzaa gifts.²⁰ Assisting with developing the vigor and well-being of the nation’s members was especially important and nationalists promoted their beliefs about healthful living within their

¹⁶ Wallach, “How to Eat to Live.”; Advocates did not limit their health-related activism to culinary concerns and foodways. For instance, a 1972 *Black News* article reported a plea for a neighborhood mobile health clinic that would provide such services as vision screening, x-rays, and sickle cell testing. “A Mobile Clinic for Our Community,” *Black News*, 1, no. 39 (April 1972): 12-14.

¹⁷ Adeyemi Bandele, interview.

¹⁸ This quote was printed in an article, which was part of the 1975 and 1976 *Black News* KWANZA commemorations. The 1975 layout informed the public about the origins and meaning of the holiday celebration, invited them to East Kwanzaa programs every day from December 1-19. “Kwanza, A Tradition,” *Black News*, 3, no. 5 (December 1975): 17 & *Black News* 3 no.13 (October 1976): 12.

¹⁹ Basir Mchawi, “Which Way Kwanza [sic],” *Black News*, 3 no. 5 (December 1975): 8.

²⁰ East Publication and Distribution ad, *Black News*, 2 no. 12 (December 26, 1973): 16-17.

communities.²¹ *Kawaida*-influenced foodways, nationalist perceptions of healthy eating, community programs, and institution-building were recurring themes in the self-narratives collected for this dissertation project, and women were integral to these activities.

Mtamanika Beatty emphasized that one of the areas where East members sought to make a difference was through modeling healthy eating habits and providing wholesome food to the community through the organization's food co-op, school, restaurant, jazz club, and catering business. Beatty asserted that many health issues, which she correlated with harmful patterns of food consumption, remained particularly problematic in the community. She recalled that East advocates encouraged cooks to provide what they viewed as better alternatives by limiting fried foods, using fewer canned goods, and putting more fresh ingredients in their recipes. She also emphasized, "We didn't serve pork at all."²²

Women also helped with The East's food co-op, although its manager was Kwesi Mensah Wali, a male. Women assisted with bringing fresh foods and other natural products in bulk form from the Bronx to Bed-Stuy, and at The East, they helped repackage these items for people who pooled money in order to receive them at lower prices.²³ In 1975, the co-op was comprised of about fifty families and group leaders. Advocates hoped to serve more people more as The East's infrastructure expanded.²⁴

²¹ Wallach, "How to Eat to Live."

²² Beatty, interview with author; The East Caterers were managed by Brother Mzee Moyo. East Caterers ad, *Black News* 4, no. 25 (August 1983):22; The East Catering service was also mentioned in Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014. One narrator suggested that the venture was a good organizational fundraiser; Akili Walker emphasized the East women's role in preparing food for the jazz club. Walker, interview.

²³ Bright, interview; Angela Weusi, et al. October 12, 2014; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 79.

²⁴ Surfaro, "The East, a Black Culture and Education Center, Brings Bit of Africa to Brooklyn."

The co-op was named *Kununuana*. It was formed in November 1970 to assist East family members and eventually the larger central Brooklyn community where it was located. Residents there grappled with problems of low-quality, highly-processed foods sold at inflated prices. In 1972, *Kununuana* offered what was termed “food for life.” A 1973 *Black News* advertisement declared co-op members’ goals: “With your support and our determination to provide our community with good food, we may yet become a SUPERMARKET HEALTH FOOD COOPERATIVE in OUR COMMUNITY. . . . Supporting the EAST stores is like putting money in the bank. You not only get the merchandise you paid for, but we reap the dividends of a developing, beautiful and safe community.”²⁵

By 1975, the circular advertised that The East co-op occupied a physical store location on Fulton Street, a main Bed-Stuy thoroughfare. At the co-op, shoppers could satisfy all their needs, from “nutritional foods,” “herbs,” “spices,” “fresh fruits,” and “vegetables” to “sweets,” “meat patties,” and “canned foods.”²⁶ Later operating under the names East Co-op Food Store and *Uhuru* Food Cooperative, the program continued until around 1992, when it closed.²⁷ Peterson remarked that *Kununuana* outlasted so many East programs because it served a specific function in the community. “I think it was probably the only place in the area that had fresh fruits and vegetables,” she said. Peterson further offered that the neighborhood lacked supermarkets and amounted to what would later be defined as what might now be labeled a “food desert,” an area

²⁵ *Kununuana* Co-op ad, *Black News*, 1 no. 39 (April 1972): 15; *Kununuana* Co-op ad, *Black News*, 2 no. 11 (December 11, 1972): n.p.

²⁶ *Black News*, 3 no. 4 (October-November 1975): 17.

²⁷ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 82.

in which residents are not able to easily access retail establishments offering healthy, affordable food.²⁸

Cooperatives, or “associations of persons for common benefit,” were not new concepts, nor were they specific to Pan-African cultural-nationalism. The first example of modern a cooperative business model was the Rochdale Pioneers. The Pioneers were hungry, impoverished weavers who decided to work together to overcome the conditions they faced as underpaid laborers in mid-nineteenth-century industrial England. Cooperatives emerged in response to various conditions and at several points in time in the United States. For instance, consumers formed Rochdale-style cooperatives when food prices spiked from 1910 to 1913. Despite state legislation facilitating such Progressive-Era collaborative ventures, they did not fare well outside the British context. Consumer co-ops also emerged during the Great Depression and the American cooperative movement gained short-term support from the New Deal Federal Emergency Relief Administration’s Division of Self-Help Cooperatives. The movement subsided as the economy recovered and funding sources dried up. The countercultural movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s stimulated another surge of alternative consumer cooperatives.²⁹

With the goal of resisting the forward march of extractive capitalism in their community and

²⁸ Peterson, interview; The term “food desert” was first used in the 1990s. The literature reflects that low-income neighborhoods and communities with a high African-American population had fewer supermarkets and chain stores than economically and racially-advantaged areas. There were also correlations between residence in food deserts and social gaps in diet and diet-related health outcomes, such as obesity, heart disease, and high blood pressure. More than three decades after the work of black nationalists involved in this study, the Centers for Disease Control suggest such corrective policies as governmental support of local cooperatives and development of community food projects. Steven Cummins and Sally Macintyre, “‘Food Deserts’: Evidence and Assumption in Health Policy Making,” *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 325, no. 7361 (August 24, 2002): 436; Julie Beaulac et al., “A Systematic Review of Food Deserts, 1966-2007,” *Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice, and Policy* 6 no. 3, A105 (July 2009): 1 & 5, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2009/jul/08_0163.htm.

²⁹ David I. Macleod, “Food Prices, Politics, and Policy in the Progressive Era,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 8, no. 4 (July 2009): 382; Marc D. Brown, “Building an Alternative: People’s Food Cooperative in Southeast Portland,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 112, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 298-301; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 82; Davis, “Consumer Liberation,” 9.

providing wholesome, affordable food to cope with rising prices, The East's *Kununuana* developed within a similar struggle for “consumer liberation” as the “insurgent” commercial practices of the 1960s countercultural movement.³⁰

Kununuana was also an outgrowth of black cooperative economics ideas and traditions. As Barbara Ransby has pointed out, longstanding practices of mutual aid existed within the African-American community. Moreover, many black organizers viewed cooperatives as pathways to economic uplift.³¹ As early as 1907, W.E.B Du Bois asserted African-American people should band together to form producer and consumer cooperatives as methods of progressing toward moderate socialism within Jim Crow and the dominant capitalist economy. He called this practice “economic co-operation.” Du Bois viewed mutual aid societies as forms of such economic cooperation.

Other civil and human rights activists helped promote similar programs of black cooperative economics. Ella Baker spearheaded a program, which was aimed at assisting economically-ravaged communities and teaching individuals about socialism during the Great Depression. She joined author George Schuyler in 1930 to serve as co-founder and national director of the Harlem-headquartered Young Negroes' Cooperative League, a clearinghouse and training center for affiliated black co-ops and buying clubs in various locales across the country. In 1969, Fannie Lou Hamer began work on Freedom Farms, a cooperative project in Northern Sunflower County, Mississippi. Hamer fought against hunger and poverty in her community through fostering Freedom Farms' programs such as a “pig bank,” a vegetable farm, a housing

³⁰ Davis also asserted that, although black capitalism was never a panacea, black-owned businesses did benefit African-American communities. Davis, “Consumer Liberation,” iii, 9, & 38.

³¹ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 88.

project, and a scholarship fund. Freedom Farms also had a business development arm that supported garment operations including an “Afro-Botique” that sold African garments. From Du Bois, Baker, and Hamer to Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere’s 1960s prescriptions for *ujamaa*, which drew on ideologies of African Socialism from ages-old extended-family traditions, people of African descent had a history of thinking and doing cooperative economics. Viewing *Kununuana* as *ujamaa* or “cooperative economics” at work, East members were in the stream of the various histories of collective commerce and women were at the center of this nation-building activity.³²

7.3 *A Woman’s Place Is in the Kitchen?: Women’s Gender Roles in Cultural-Nationalist Food Preparation and Consumption*

Black Panther Party leader Elaine Brown provided a snapshot of chauvinistic *Kawaida* gender conventions related to dining in her 1992 autobiography. She described attending a 1967 gathering of activists, many of whom were affiliated with the Us Organization’s San Diego branch. After contributing five dollars toward a collective meal and waiting in line for her share,

³² The Kawaida Groundwork Committee and the Organization Us participated in the Inner Cities Food Cooperative with the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). The NCNW’s goal was to help counteract the negative effects of rapidly-divesting outlets for reasonably-priced healthy foods in urban areas by bulk purchasing items and selling them at discounted rate to residents who paid a small fee to be a member of the co-op. Unknowingly foreshadowing this author’s claim that such activities resembled what would later be called social-entrepreneurship business models more than the extractive capitalism of critics’ accusations, the NCNW co-op’s president explained, “Our co-op is people –oriented not profit-oriented.” Subira Kifano served as board member of the NCNW’s Inner City Food Cooperative in 1983. The Sunflower County section of the NCNW had also contributed to Freedom Farm, particularly providing the first fifty pigs that started the program’s initial “pig bank” program. Such connecting threads suggest the importance of women’s contributions to a long tradition of black cooperative economics underscore the idea that women in black power cultural-nationalist groups used certain tactics that were similar to those of their counterparts who participated in earlier phases of the Long Black Freedom Struggle. “NCNW Opens Inner Cities Food Cooperative Sept. 3,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 1, 1983, C10; Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, 82; Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 99-100; Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom’s Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2000), 147-152.

a young woman wearing a long, West-African-styled dress declared, “You will have to wait until our Brothers are served.” The woman reiterated her stance by stating “Our Brothers are our warriors. Our warriors must be fed first, sisters.” Brown recounted that she and another woman at the event protested their unfair treatment, but they were soon confronted by a man looking much like the other males in Us, bald and wearing a dashiki-type shirt. Arms folded across his chest, he told them they had been “unsisterly” for wanting to be served with the men. His reaction exhibited to the two women that he thought their attitudes represented a level of impertinence “for which blood could be shed.”³³

Brown’s recollections were not anomalous. The gendered foodways (in which women generally prepared the food, but men ate before women) that Elaine Brown recounted about the Us Organization, at least in its earliest phase, were expressions of the broader complementarity ethos. Complementarity meant that men and women had essentially different, gender-determined places within the struggle for black freedom, and that men should be leaders while women must play support roles. Complementary gender responsibilities linked to foodways also showed up in East-related writings, which encouraged mothers, aunts, sisters and other relatives to “prepare and cook good Afrikan food collectively” for the Kwanzaa feast or *karamu*. Fathers, uncles, brothers, and other males were only encouraged to “share the expenses of the food and drink.”³⁴

Not limited to a binary gender divide related to cooking and eating, CFUN dictated a hierarchical serving order according to organizational rank. Komozi Woodard explained that individuals with lower status ate last. “The lowest rank was a Turtle, which is a *Kobe* . . . and I

³³ Brown, *A Taste of Power*, 108-109.

³⁴ This quote was printed in an article, which was part of the 1975 and 1976 *Black News* KWANZA commemorations. The 1975 layout informed the public about the origins and meaning of the holiday celebration, invited them to East Kwanzaa programs every day from December 1-19. “Kwanza, A Tradition,” *Black News*, 3, no. 5 (December 1975): 17 & *Black News* 3 no.13 (October 1976): 12.

was *Kobe Komozi*. I was the lowest rank in the organization. The highest rank locally was the *Imamu* and that was *Imamu Baraka*. . . . The *imamu* and the high council would eat first, and we had collective eating,” explained Woodward. He also chuckled, “I would be waiting in the wings. I guess I would eat at, like, 10:00 at night because I was so lowly ranked.”³⁵ CFUN sisters were responsible for communal food preparation and the cleaning of the kitchen from which all members ate, a practice called *Chakula Ujamaa*.³⁶ Woodward’s accounts included reflections of the ways women operated within CFUN’s dichotomized and hierarchical social relations. He stated in his oral narrative that while *Imamu Baraka* eventually began eating second helpings and conversing with Woodward as he ate his late-night dinner, some of the sisters would have already slipped food to him earlier in the evening, soon after the meal was prepared. Additionally, he wrote that communal cooking and foodservice were practices among several others that CFUN women developed to stay active in the organization’s political life while dealing with the added burdens of housework, childrearing, and construction and care of clothing.³⁷

Despite the fact that some women found ways to work around constrictive and authoritarian organizational practices, a sense of ambivalence about the gendered dimensions of food preparation, consumption, and distribution can be found in the narratives collected for this dissertation. On one hand, some of the women lamented being on kitchen duty. They suggested an awareness that the task of preparing the food, whether on a daily basis, at regular organizational gatherings, or at important meetings, could have a tendency to keep women on the fringes of decision-making and strategizing. For instance, an East advocate discussed her

³⁵ Komozi Woodward, telephone interview with author, July 24, 2013.

³⁶ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012; Woodward, *A Nation within a Nation*, 135; Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82.

³⁷ Woodward, interview; Woodward, *A Nation within a Nation*, 135.

memories of one of the important inaugural East meetings with ironic laughter. She said “I wasn’t at the meeting. I was cooking for the meeting in the kitchen of an apartment shared by Job and Seitu Dyson and a couple of other brothers and I was cooking and eavesdropping . . . when Jitu outlined his thoughts for The East to . . . all these brothers who were there at the time.”³⁸

On one hand, East advocates’ narratives illuminated the fact that the organization’s food preparation and service practices could be restrictive for females. On the other hand, a closer look at how food preparation in several *Kawaida*-influenced organizations was remembered reveals that participants viewed the kitchen in complex ways. In one instance, kitchens functioned as spaces where women could broaden and commercialize the kinds of skills they developed in the process of learning to provide nourishment for their own families inside and outside *Kawaida*-influenced organizations. For instance, in explaining the importance of The East to the local community, Walker recalled a woman, possibly Lottie Hicks, who began cooking at *Uhuru Sasa* during a bout of unemployment. “Jitu took her skills of being a good cook at home, and taught her how to cook for large groups of people, Walker wrote. “This skill allowed her later to get a job at Rikers Island prison from which she eventually retired.”³⁹ Mtamanika Beatty shared a similar recollection. In her narrative, Beatty described how she began cooking the weekday meals for about 200 *Uhuru Sasa* students, faculty, and staff after taking courses in quantity food preparation. The hands-on experience she received assisted her

³⁸ Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014; Amina Baraka told a similar story about Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 1968 visit to her home, although she stated she was cleaning rather than cooking. Amina Baraka, interview by Kim Brown, *Kim’s Korner*, May 28, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgcZjQ6vfBw>.

³⁹ Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 17.

when she decided to start her own business venture, T.J.'s Chicken Shack, a take-out restaurant serving home-style meals in the Bedford-Stuyvesant/Fort Greene area during the 1990s.⁴⁰

Martha Bright emphasized that men were part of The East's culture of food preparation, sales, and distribution; however, ladies factored prominently in the important tasks of providing nourishment for the community and raising funds to support educational ventures through cooking and serving food. She explained, "We had a restaurant called the Sweet-East. . . . A brother ran that by the name of Brother Abdullah, but sisters certainly worked in there." She highlighted the important leadership roles women held in East culinary ventures adding, "We [sisters] ran the kitchen and East catering service." Bright pointed out that women were heavily involved in the East's program of food distribution as well. "There's no aspect of The East that sisters really weren't involved in except for maybe security. That's the only thing that I can think of that sisters were not really front and center in," she recalled.⁴¹

The *Black News* article, "Afrikan Women Unite," highlighted the importance of the East women's work. In it, the author stated that The East sisterhood "helps fulfill the organization's function as a cultural and educational institution for people of Afrikan descent." The writer added, "As Afrikan Women, they play a vital role in the organization's day to day operations, which include the *Uhuru Sasa* Schools, a bookstore[,] a clothing store, a cooperative food buying service, and the newspapers 'Black News' which features 'Fundisha' the official voice of the Congress of Afrikan People." The statement was published in a piece announcing CAP's national Afrikan Women's Seminars on "The Role of the Black Woman in the Revolution,"

⁴⁰ Beatty, interview; See Black and Angaza, *The EAST Sisterhood*, 3 for a general statement and example of women using skills they acquired and developed in The East in their future careers and community work.

⁴¹ Bright, interview, part 1 of 2; Weusi et al., interview, October 12, 2014.

which preceded the Newark-based Afrikan Women's Conference in July 1974. Amina Baraka addressed the July seminars and the East Sisterhood also hosted a spring session with Jitu Weusi as the guest speaker. The purpose was to raise awareness of issues plaguing African Americans and caucus black women with the purpose of problem solving. The topics on the agenda seemed to remain within the "acceptable" bounds of African Womanhood, as they included "Education, Social Organization, Politics, Health, Communications, and Institutional Development."⁴² Such literature reveals the multidimensional interplay between advocates' thinking about women's importance in organizational enterprises and the realities of the nation-building work women performed within their more typically feminine roles on the ground. Although their realities were complex, what is clear is that cultural-nationalist women heeded the rhythms of *taifa saa* just as men did.

7.4 "Black Women— Hope for the Future": Ahidiana-Based Gatherings in New Orleans⁴³

Ahidiana administered several enterprises in the spirit of *ujamaa* including a bookstore, printing press, health and nutrition club, school, and community organization.⁴⁴ Also in the spirit of *ujamaa*, the group's relatively more egalitarian gender roles exemplified "collectivity" in that they challenged the notion of one-dimensional, Black Power masculinism. New Afrika Books, discussed in Chapter Four as a function of larger *Kawaida* literacy traditions, was an outgrowth of an Ahidiana Sunday study group. The bookstore carried publications from various sources

⁴² "Afrikan Women Unite," *Black News* 2, no. 16 (April 1974): 11.

⁴³ "Black Woman's Group Presents Black Women: Hope for the Future," flyer 1984, Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection.

⁴⁴ Kalamu ya Salaam, interview.

and, significantly, featured those printed by the organization's press, *Ahidiania Habari*. The press featured pieces by accomplished writers such as Kalamu ya Salaam, as well as the writings of other African-descended authors preferring to work with a black publisher.⁴⁵ Notably, *Ahidiania Habari* also printed works by Tayari kwa Salaam, one of the relatively few women involved in this study who published during the 1960s, 1970s, or early 1980s, and whose reflections provide a glimpse of women's written expressions about gender roles and the evolving values of *Kawaida*-influenced organizations. Her reflections suggested growth, from the earlier children's books that reinforced complementary gender roles to subsequent pamphlets underscoring the importance of female leadership and gender equality in the Black Freedom Struggle.

Not all Ahidiania enterprises existed within the realm of literacy traditions. Aside from literary pursuits, group members also engaged in collective food buying. Somewhat like East advocates, those belonging to the Ahidiania collective emphasized holistic nutrition and bought quantity goods to share with each other. They also bought in bulk to cut costs incurred from providing daily, warm, vegetarian meals for students attending the organization's school.⁴⁶ "Ujamaa," A children's story that Tayari penned, emphasized the importance of food co-ops within the context of *Kawaida* principles.⁴⁷ The tale featured the characters "Brother Dog" and

⁴⁵ In reference to egalitarian gender roles, Camara asserted that women and men were equal partners in Ahidiania. He contrasted the organization's "mutual respect" between members to the "power struggles and masculine posturing" in other Black Power groups. Camara, "There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans," 193 & 200-201; For more information on Ahidiania's various enterprises also see St. Julien, *Upon the Shoulders of Elephants*, 14.

⁴⁶ Camara, "There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans," 193; Tayari kwa Salaam, "Practice the Values and Love Revolution," 46; Tayari kwa Salaam and Kalamu ya Salaam, *Who Will Speak for Us? New Afrikan Folktales*, (New Orleans: Ahidiania, 1974), n.p.; Another Ahidiania activity related to larger Black-Power cultural-nationalist foodways included vegetarian cooking workshops for parents of Work/Study Center students. The classes were intended to encourage healthy eating at home. Wakesa Madzimoyo, "Afrikan-Americans Educate Their Own," *Southern Exposure* VIII, no. 3 (Fall 1980), 45.

⁴⁷ This author asserts that *Who Will Speak for Us* is a reflection of Kawiada philosophy, as Tayari kwa Salaam not only explores the Seven Principles in the work, but she also reinforces the importance of adhering to the teachings of both Maulana Karenga and Imamu Baraka. Salaam and Salaam, *Who Will Speak for Us?*, n.p.

“Sister Cat,” two hungry friends with limited funds. Brother Dog suggested that Sister Cat accompany him to buy cheese from a food co-op to fill their stomachs while practicing familyhood and cooperative economics. Dog said, “Let’s put our money together and we’ll have enough money to get cheese.” The characters then “went to town and bought the small block of cheese at Duka Ujamaa, the food co-op.” Salaam wrote, “The block of cheese they bought was bigger and heavier than it would have been if they had bought it at a regular store,” highlighting the importance of food co-ops.⁴⁸

The two friends’ struggles with their hefty chunk of cheese did not simply spotlight the importance of collective food purchasing and consumption as expressions of *ujamaa*; it also provided a backdrop for presenting ideas about gender. When the time came for coordinating how their weighty meal would be transported, Dog said to Cat, “Brothers have a responsibility to lead; so, I’ll take the first turn. And sisters are completers; you can take a second turn.” Tayari kwa Salaam’s words reflected early Pan-African cultural-nationalist values, reminding boys to embrace their duties as leaders and girls to support males in such roles.

The other stories in the larger work, titled *Who Will Speak for Us?*, were more reflective of the mid-1970s challenges to the kinds of sex roles that excluded females from visible, formal leadership positions. In one tale, Sister Ant emerged as an organizer in the struggle because of her knowledge and skills, despite the fact that she did not possess the large body typically associated with warriors. Sister Green Bird emerged as a leader in other stories. In part because of Ahidiana’s various enterprises, Tayari’s publications remain available in the archival record, adding another woman’s voice to those Scot Brown cited as members of a *Kawaida*-influenced

⁴⁸ Duka Ujamaa was the name of a cooperative grocery store in Newark. Ad, *Black Newark*, February 1973, 5; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 135.

stratum of cultural-nationalist activist-artists and to the body of work Ashley Farmer has introduced as representing women's gendered cultural-nationalist theorizing.⁴⁹

In addition to using literature as a vehicle, Ahidiana members articulated concern over the plight of black women in Pan-African organizations and stressed the need for female leaders in black women's gatherings. One such example was the Black Woman's Conference, which Ahidiana established in 1978. The assembly was held annually for four years on the campus of Southern University of New Orleans. According to Samori Camara, the Black Woman's Conference was "local and powerful." The purpose of the forum was to assist black women with developing themselves by theorizing, planning, and organizing in resistance to race, class, and gender oppression.⁵⁰ Warren-Williams stated that the conferences highlighted such issues as rape, domestic violence, equal pay, reproductive rights, women's health, nutrition, and fitness.⁵¹

The Black Woman's Conferences particularly focused on the value of obtaining education in a manner suggesting that both teaching and learning were aspects of *kazi*. Highlighting the importance of women's roles as teachers, Warren-Williams expressed the significance of advancing women's education for entire communities and to the overall nation-building endeavor. "When you educate a woman, you educate a nation," she said. There was a "notion that if the women are educated, then they in turn educated the children, which helped to build a better nation," she further explained.⁵² She recognized the importance of formal

⁴⁹ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 153-157; Farmer, "Renegotiating the 'African Women,'" 76.

⁵⁰ Camara, "There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans," 201 & 203; Perhaps, in using the word "powerful," Camara referred to Tayari kwa Salaam's claim that "each year women participants would be moved by the conference proceedings and become inspired to start an organization for Black women." She offered the Black Women's Group as an example. Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-Journeying," 112.

⁵¹ Warren-Williams, interview.

⁵² Warren-Williams, interview.

education, but also suggested the value of meetings like the Black Woman's Conferences as informal educational spaces with relatively few entry barriers for women, for entire communities, and in support of the nationalist cause.⁵³

The Black Woman's Conference generally followed a standard format, lasting all day Saturday and ending Sunday afternoon.⁵⁴ The yearly gathering featured panel discussions, workshops, keynote addresses, films and a concert. The conferences attracted greater than a hundred people a day and attendees came from many walks of life. They included people from other local and regional social and political organizations, elders, parents of children from Ahidiana, local radicals, individuals affiliated with other independent and supplementary black schools, and college students.⁵⁵

The Third Annual Black Woman's Conference was held July 5 and 6, 1980. Ahidiana co-hosted the event on the SUNO campus in conjunction with the Department of Social Welfare. It carried the theme, "Working Together, We Can Make a Change." Conference organizers expressed what could be considered a womanist intent in that they sought to galvanize the entire community to address women's issues. Organizers consciously included males as participants and addressed issues involving children. The purpose of the meeting, as reflected in the program, was to cultivate black women's attempts at personal development and self-defense. The conference was also intended to support black women's organizing efforts, both among themselves and alongside men.⁵⁶

⁵³ The Black Woman's Conference required registration, cost was \$12 in advance to attend, and, was \$15 on-site. Third Annual Black Woman's Conference, program.

⁵⁴ Camara, "There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans," 202; "Second Annual Black Woman's Conference: 'Understanding Black Women,'" program 1979, Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection.

⁵⁵ Warren-Williams, interview.

⁵⁶ Third Annual Black Woman's Conference, program.

The 1980 proceedings followed the standard format for other Ahidiana Black Woman's Conferences. Female nurses and physicians led a workshop aimed at offering information for women in their daily struggles with health maintenance. Stressing a key tenet in terms of the importance of nationalist mothering, organizers noted the assembly was partially aimed at supporting women in the work of rearing offspring who were "strong in their identity, purpose and direction."⁵⁷ Emphasizing such themes as communal care for children, the sessions on childrearing also reflected the event's womanist orientation. They featured presentations from Nilima Mwendo, who spoke on collective child care, Shawishi wa Watu St. Julien, who explored Ahidiana Work/Study Center as a model school, and Tayari kwa Salaam, who discussed techniques for children's academic development.

Conference-goers could also view *Portrait of Teresa*, a Cuban film about a woman struggling to balance the competing demands of family, job, and self-care. The film portrayed Teresa navigating work at a textile factory, mothering three sons, and struggling to maintain a relationship with her husband. Her marriage to Ramon, a television repairman, was plagued with domestic violence.⁵⁸ Convention organizers also noted that the film was important because it depicted a woman "making decisions about developing herself" and it centered "on the contradictions that must be resolved if women are to develop themselves as whole human beings."⁵⁹

One session dealt with black male/female relationships and included Kalamu ya Salaam and social worker, Morris F.X. Jeff. A second highlighted a panel of experienced black female

⁵⁷ Third Annual Black Woman's Conference, program.

⁵⁸ Janet Maslin, "'Portrait of Teresa' at the Modern," *New York Times*, April 27, 1981, 51.

⁵⁹ "Third Annual Black Woman's Conference: 'Working Together, We Can Make a Change,'" program.

community leaders of the previous generation. The group included: Republic of New Afrika president, Dara Abubakari; entrepreneur and internationally-known chef Leah Chase; and Aline St. Julien, outspoken advocate of civil rights and black power, author, and mother of Tayari, Nilima, and Mtumishi.⁶⁰ Sonia Sanchez delivered the keynote address. She also gave a concert performance alongside the acapella ensemble of women cultural and political activists, Sweet Honey in the Rock.⁶¹

Warren-Williams, who served on the Black Woman's Conference organizing committee, recalled that she did not give gender roles in Ahidiana much attention prior to the gatherings. "I guess at that point in my development, I didn't really do too much differentiating, but being a female, we were primarily tasked with the children and the education of the children but the men were also involved in that aspect," she explained. She surmised, "I didn't really see tremendous differences and I don't think at that particular time I was focused in on female versus male stuff. I didn't give it much thought."⁶²

She went on to clarify that her gender consciousness was raised through participation in the conferences. "Primarily, my consciousness around [gender] began with the advent of the Black Woman's Conferences, which again pulled women's issues out and highlighted them; therefore, we organized and brought women from other organizations, groups, and just the

⁶⁰ "Third Annual Black Woman's Conference: 'Working Together, We Can Make a Change,'" program; John Pope, "Virginia Evalena Young Collins, Teacher, Nurse, and Activist, Dies at Age 96," *The Times-Picayune*, July 28, 2011, accessed November 10, 2015, http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/07/virginia_evalena_young_collins.html; For more on Aline St. Julien's reflections on racial and ethnic identity, see Mary Gehman, "Toward an Understanding of the Quadroon Society of New Orleans, 1780-1860," in *Southern Women*, ed. Caroline Matheny Dillman (Routledge: New York, 1988), 54-55; Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-Journeying," iv; Aline St. Julien, *Colored Creole: Color Conflict and Confusion in New Orleans*, pamphlet, 1987 reprint of 1972 essay, Vera Warren-Williams papers, private collection; Lakisha Michelle Simmons, *Crescent City Girls: The Lives of Young Women in Segregated New Orleans* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 56, 61-63, & 164-165.

⁶¹ "Third Annual Black Woman's Conference: 'Working Together, We Can Make a Change,'" program.

⁶² Warren-Williams, interview.

community as a whole to address . . . issues.”⁶³ Overall, Warren-Williams believed the assemblies harnessed the energy of Ahidiana members’ struggles in relation to uplifting women.

A 1981 booklet entitled *Working Together We Can Make a Change: Towards Sisterhoods of Struggle* echoed Warren-Williams’ sentiments. The brochure also reflected the influence of the Black Woman’s Conferences on other Ahidiana members’ thinking and activism related to women’s rights. Written by Tayari kwa Salaam, it mirrored the conferences in its messaging and aesthetics. The booklet contained two essays. The title essay was written in June 1980 as part of the third conference. The other piece, dated July 7, 1979, was linked to the prior year’s conference; titled “Identity and Assertiveness,” it was meant to serve as a practical guide to for women’s self-development. Illustrations by local activist/artist, Douglas Redd, suggested themes of women’s work, revolutionary action, unity, and black pride. One picture, which also adorned the Third Black Woman’s Conference cover, depicted a stylized image of a circle of women with corn-rowed hair, surrounding what appeared to be a quilt.⁶⁴

Tayari kwa Salaam expressed that her thinking about black women’s struggles changed over time in the first essay, as Vera Warren-Williams and Nana Anoa Nantambu had in their self-narratives. Emphasizing the idea that her early focus was on racial issues to the exclusion of gender and class, Salaam wrote, “At first, when asked, ‘What issues affect Black Women?’ I quickly responded, ‘The same ones that affect Black people!’” She then wrote, “Are we not Black people, too? When it comes to oppression and exploitation our enemies make no

⁶³ Warren-Williams, interview.

⁶⁴ Tayari kwa Salaam, *Working Together*, booklet, 2, 9, & 10.

exceptions. Aren't we daily attacked as African-americans [sic] in this white supremacist society?"⁶⁵

Reconsidering the multiple forms of oppression black women faced, Salaam mused, "On second thought, I remembered that, on a broad scale as women in a sexist society, we do have particular needs and issues because of the blatant sexism practiced in American life." She then went on to provide supporting evidence of gender discrimination ranging from pay inequality to educational disparities. "Looking closer at ourselves, not only as women, but as Black women in a society that is not only sexist, but one that is also racist and capitalist, we face additional struggles based on economic exploitation and racial and sexual oppression," she wrote in a manner indicating an understanding of tripartite oppression. She ultimately advocated for greater self-defense and personal development among women arguing that marginalized females could only serve as "figureheads" and "decorative fringe" when the time came for serious political organizing. She pointedly stated that only fully-developed females who black men respected as "comrades, friends, and lovers" could battle sexism, transform themselves and society, and work for the progress of the entire race.⁶⁶

Tayari kwa Salaam proposed techniques for assisting black women in the process of self-development and achieving greater self-determination. Outlining a program sounding much like what would become the Black Women's Group, she proposed a three-step approach for, first, fostering self-awareness in both women and men; second, planning and implementing programs to include informal women's support groups; and finally, forming women's organizations or "Sisterhoods of Struggle," which were defined as "formal, structured, political, collective

⁶⁵ Warren-Williams, interview; Nana Anoa Nantambu, interview; Tayari kwa Salaam, *Working Together*, booklet, 3.

⁶⁶ Tayari kwa Salaam, *Working Together*, booklet, 3-4.

alliances whose purpose and plans are clearly stated, written, and understood by members.” The small collectives would be “informal and loosely organized with a de-emphasis on group conformity to values and beliefs” and accenting identity, purpose, direction, and the broad “exchange of ideas.”⁶⁷ The author suggested the support groups should work with others to co-sponsor women’s rights organizing, demonstrations, and programming. The larger, more formal organizations were to focus on specific aspects of women’s empowerment related to the areas of self-determination, self-defense, and self-respect. Members were to operate in conjunction with “other formations of Black and Third World people.”⁶⁸

Asserting the need for men to support women in the home as they both worked to liberate entire communities, Tayari kwa Salaam used her personal endeavors and Ahidiana’s collective struggles as models. Also evident in her writings were the influences of Amina Baraka and CAP. Salaam expressed the idea that she came into greater consciousness about women’s rights through the process of working with Ahidiana, organizing locally for CAP’s 1974 National Afrikan Women’s Conference and the Black Woman’s Conferences, as well as by implementing Kalamu ya Salaam’s ideology as outlined in *Revolutionary Love*. Tayari stated, “In my own political and social life over the past eight years as a member of Ahidiana, we have gone through a gradual transformation in which men and women in our group are both responsible for housecare [sic] and childcare while both are also actively developing career choices and other interests.” Further, Salaam wrote, “The struggle around sexism was a strenuous ordeal for our organization and most of us grew in varying degrees but we grew. Our school has advanced, we

⁶⁷ I propose that organizational structure and size cannot be overlooked as elements giving rise to ideas and policies supporting greater women’s equality in Kawaidea-influenced groups. Kalamu ya Salaam discussed how Ahidiana was more consensus-based than Kawaidea-influenced groups and Rickford made the claim that Ahidiana possessed a “stronger ethic of self-criticism” than other nationalist formations. Kalamu ya Salaam, interview with author; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 146.

⁶⁸ Tayari kwa Salaam, *Working Together*, booklet, 4 & 7.

have given annual Black Woman's Conferences since 1978, and we women of Ahidiana are continually developing and taking the lead in projects." Tayari Salaam pronounced that, with its programs for communal housework and childcare, Ahidiana was a model for the possibilities of "Black men and Black women to struggle and work together as equals." Finally, she asserted that females from the historical Queen Nzinga to Harriet Tubman, were integral to black history in their roles as "women warriors." In other words, contemporary African-descended women were seen as essential as leaders and foot soldiers in the collective struggle against the racist, sexist, and capitalist forms of oppression and exploitation their communities faced.⁶⁹

In addition to Tayari Salaam's published work, the Black Women's Group (BWG) also evolved from both Ahidiana and the Black Woman's Conferences. Consisting of twenty to thirty women and functioning as a support system, meeting monthly during the mid-1980s in various members' homes, the BWG was more intimate than the conferences.⁷⁰ As a child, Kina Joshua-Jasmine attempted to listen in on the serious conversations broached in the BWG meetings her mother hosted at their home. "It was a group of African-American women that wanted to continue to make change in their community," Joshua-Jasmine recounted. She further explained that the women began by changing themselves and that much of their work toward assisting in the community was connected "with them dealing with their own personal issues first."⁷¹ Warren-Williams remarked that, when compared to Ahidiana's general body, the Group "spoke more to the needs of the women in the organization." Further, Warren-Williams suggested that the BWG gave women a platform for regularly addressing women's issues.⁷²

⁶⁹ Tayari Salaam, *Working Together*, booklet, 5-6 & 8.

⁷⁰ Warren-Williams, interview; Kina B. Joshua-Jasmine, interview with author, New Orleans, LA, May 28, 2013.

⁷¹ Joshua-Jasmine, interview.

⁷² Warren-Williams, interview.

The Black Women's Group consisted of Ahidiana advocates as well as women from other walks of life, who came together for a myriad of reasons. They met regularly for peer counseling sessions, discussions, and to view films covering specific topics. They occasionally planned retreats, which included workshops. Members also shared employment information, participated in communal childcare, and bought food cooperatively. Women in the group dealt with various "personal, social, and political" topics such as domestic violence and leadership within BWG meetings. The BWG's "interactive sessions" focused on "self-discovery" in an atmosphere of camaraderie and shared leadership.⁷³

Black Women's Group members thought of the circle as helpful in many ways. For instance, Tayari kwa Salaam praised the BWG for providing an opportunity to practically (rather than theoretically) explore the meaning of her oppression as an African-American woman.⁷⁴ Additionally, New Orleans native Carol Bebelle became involved in the group during the mid-to-late 1980s. She explained that cultural nationalism influenced the BWG's ideology and that the *Nguzo Saba* "were our ten commandments." She also said, "Going to the Black Women's Group was like a coming of age." The experience enhanced the way she understood "the importance of culture and how present it is in everything . . . how important it is for us to essentially use it as a footing to be able to learn how to be able to practice the values . . . that we aspire to." Notably, Bebelle is currently known for speaking and writing about culture as a transformative element.

⁷³ Warren-Williams, interview; Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-Journeying," 112-113; Quotes are from Carol Bebelle, interview; Ahidiana was a consensus-based rather than dictatorial and hierarchical organization. Kalamu ya Salaam, interview and Tayari kwa Salaam, "Practice the Values and Love Revolution," *Black Books Bulletin* 2 (Winter 1974): 42.

⁷⁴ Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-Journeying," 114.

For instance, she has advocated for using such cultural manifestations as the performing arts as methods of developing unity between disparate communities.⁷⁵

In her narrative, Bebelle also described the BWG as feminist or womanist in orientation. “At that a time people were working between Alice Walker’s womanist . . . [writing] and Audre Lorde’s [feminist publications],” she recalled. The BWG “was a group of Black women who were [also] asserting the equality and the importance of women,” Bebelle added. The BWG helped members develop such skills as empathy and increased their tolerance in certain ways. For example, Bebelle said, “I worked through my homophobia in the Black Women’s Group.”⁷⁶

Such skills were helpful in the work Bebelle performed as cofounder and executive director of the Ashé Cultural Center in New Orleans’ blighted, predominantly African-American Central City neighborhood. The Center began in 1998 and has implemented community and human development projects using culture and creativity. Like the BWG, Ashé is grounded in the *Nguzo Saba* and its programs highlight African-descended people. The Center is a nonprofit providing space and opportunities for artistic presentations, community development, outreach ventures, artist support, and other related projects. Ashé has played a role in helping revitalize both the Central City community and greater New Orleans and is counted among the city’s most important post-Katrina cultural establishments.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Bebelle, interview; “Carol Bebelle,” Tulane University Center for Public Service, accessed November 26, 2015, <https://tulane.edu/cps/about/gnoiac-carol-bebelle.cfm>; Catherine Michna, “Performance and Cross-Racial Storytelling in Post-Katrina New Orleans: Interviews with John O’Neal, Carol Bebelle, and Nicholas Slie,” *The Drama Review* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 49.

⁷⁶ Bebelle, interview.

⁷⁷ Ashé means “life force” in the Yoruba language. Bebelle cofounded Ashé with Douglass Redd. Michna, “Performance and Cross-Racial Storytelling in Post-Katrina New Orleans,” 49, 50 & 56-57; Carol Bebelle and Charles Henry Rowell, “Carol Bebelle with Charles Henry Rowell,” *Callaloo* 29, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 1212; “Ashé Cultural Arts Center,” accessed November 26, 2015, <http://www.ashecac.org/main/>; “Carol Bebelle.”

Although Ashé still exists, the Black Women's Group ended due to conflicts over its purpose and direction. The BWG's imprint on several of New Orleans' community-oriented female activists is its greatest legacy according to Bebelle's assessment.⁷⁸ The group was an example of Pan-African cultural nationalists' influence beyond the late 1960s and early 1970s. As Bebelle, explained, there was "very direct contact" between Maulana Karenga's *Kawaida* ideals, which influenced Ahidiana, whose members, in turn, influenced the BWG. Bebelle expressed that she knew about Karenga and the *Nguzo Saba* before becoming involved with the BWG. Her narrative, however, also indicated that the women in the group, many of whom were Ahidiana advocates modeled a simultaneous practice of Pan-African cultural-nationalist values and womanist ethics in their efforts to nurture and strengthen black women leaders and activists and to positively influence their communities. For instance, during Kwanzaa 1984, the Black Women's Group hosted a program titled "Black Women: Hope for the Future" with National Black Feminist Organization founder, Patricia Coleman-Burns as the featured speaker. Another example of the BWG programming can be found in their "Rap On" Kwanzaa presentation, which took place on the night of *Ujima*, Saturday, December 28, 1985 at the Xavier University Pharmacy Auditorium. The activity included films and discussions meant to reach teens with instructive messages about sexuality, self-image, and peer pressure. The evening culminated with a contest for the best "message rap," or hip-hop song containing positive or politically-charged lyrics.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Bebelle mentioned such community advocates as former Ahidiana member, Nilima Mwendo (Lower Ninth Ward activist) and Vera Warren-Williams (Community Book Center) as well as local nurse, Teja Carey. Bebelle, interview.

⁷⁹ "Black Woman's Group Presents Black Women: Hope for the Future," flyer; "KWANZAA News."

The BWG exemplifies the fact that the story of cultural nationalism is not solely one in which passive women accepted or were merely victims of a masculinist edicts. Narratives like Bebelles' reveal that women metaphorically laid hands on a syncretic *Kawaida*-influenced cultural nationalism and expanded the way the ideology was implemented. Some female advocates of 1960s and 1970s cultural nationalism consciously reshaped a previously masculinist ideology in new ways, such as by using some of its basic values for community programs with specific emphasis on women's equality; in doing so, they created different possibilities for its future uses. Female activists would draw upon cultural-nationalist values and couple them with feminism and womanism in ways that undergirded the *kazi* they performed in their community work and activism.⁸⁰

Cultural-nationalist women's work in *Kawaida*-influenced community enterprises and programs proved integral to the economics of nation building through such activities as garment design, production, and sales. Moreover, *kazi* undergirded their motivation to participate as well as their leadership styles. Women also occupied a central role in helping promote and preserve potential citizens' health and vitality through their practice of black-nationalist foodways for family and nation. While the hierarchical notions about gender-relations and other such authoritarian beliefs plagued *Kawaida*-influenced organizations, women harnessed cultural-nationalism to instate practices like communal meals to mitigate the burden of certain feminized tasks from food preparation and service to cleanup. Their narratives reflected multiple viewpoints. Some viewed the gendered nature of nationalist food preparation and service practices as restrictive, having experienced the realities of being relegated to the fringes of political work because of such assignments as kitchen duty. Others viewed the kitchens of black-

⁸⁰ Joshua-Jasmine cited the BWG's work as feminism. Joshua-Jasmine, interview.

nationalist institutions as places where women could market the kinds of skills developed via domestic roles. Black women in Ahidiana's assemblies and conclaves exemplified how cultural-nationalist ideologies could be employed alongside feminist and womanist values in community programming. The women's individual stories were not solely those of passive females who fully accepted Black Power masculinism but reflections of women who were essential to nationalist enterprises and programs, as they contributed to and expanded the larger efforts of *Kawaida*-influenced organizations to enact *taifa saa*.

8 "TO BUILD OUR NATION . . . TEACH OUR CHILDREN!": FEMALES' GENDER ROLES IN INDEPENDENT AND SUPPLEMENTARY BLACK EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS¹

Four young *Simbas* stood in line, steely-eyed and disciplined. A dashiki-clad adult male Us member shouted as he stood over the shoulder of a young recruit. The boys' yellow shirts were emblazoned with a roaring lion. The logo of the Us Organization was clenched in the big cat's fearsome fangs. These images of Us' earliest youth education and training efforts were plastered across the July 15, 1966 cover of *Life* magazine in the aftermath of the Watts rebellion. Notably, no women or girls appeared in the picture. Brenda Haiba Karenga's class at the Aquarian Center, however, was later depicted in Scot Brown's book about Us. The course at the organization's initial meeting space struck a visual contrast to the photograph of the earliest *Simbas*. At the Aquarian, children sat around a table in front of a bulletin board filled with images of black subjects. A girl raised her hand as she looked into her instructor's pleasant countenance. The two pictures stood as images of Us' gender prescriptions and the ways those

¹ "Work/Study Center Ninth Annual Graduation Celebration," brochure.

roles were transferred to young people through the organization's initial educational endeavors.²

Independent and supplementary black educational programs were some of the most important endeavors Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations undertook in their communities. IBIs were places where teachers and administrators reoriented, re-educated, and re-trained the next generation of nationalist-minded people. Educator training institutes, nurseries, and kindergarten through twelfth-grade day schools, afterschool programs, and weekend classes, teachers and administrators all sought to forward the black liberation struggle by providing a politicized education that would aid nationality formation in their local communities. IBIs were some of the longest-running programs of Pan-African cultural-nationalist institutions. Often organized in the most difficult of situations, the institutions were seen as practical methods of addressing the educational challenges African Americans faced. In the realm of ideals, the schools could be characterized as maroon zones, "kilombos," or shelters for African Americans seeking to escape white dominance. Such communities were places to envision a world free of European domination.³

This chapter explores reflections on females' gender roles and education in the IBIs of Us, Committee for a Unified Newark and the Congress of African People, The East, and Ahidiana. Within such Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations, which initially drew upon a philosophy limiting females' gender roles to home, education, and supporting males' agendas, these schools were important outlets for women's political work. Although advocates framed

² *Life*, July 15, 1966, cover; Brown, *Fighting for US*, n.p.; Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview.

³ Not considering them "kilombos" or safe zones for African-descended people fleeing hegemonic oppression, Rickford cited IBIs as potential seedbeds of revolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but cast them as superficially and symbolically Afrocentric, mere reflections of the extant conservatism by the late 1970s and early 1980s. On the contrary, Scot Brown suggested that nationalists look toward advocates of cultural nationalism for ideological clarity and support during the post-1960s period of conservative ascendance. Brown, *Fighting for US*, 129.

African Womanhood as an essentially African-diasporic expression, their work also resembled the Early National Period concept of Republican Motherhood in certain ways. According to historian Linda K. Kerber, the prototypical republican woman was a mother who exemplified, imparted, and upheld the spirit of the republic within her domestic realm.⁴ Likewise, the ideal African woman was seen as a “mama,” who represented, protected, and instructed the nascent black nation. As Pan-African cultural-nationalist teachers, they were viewed as filling an *in loco parentis* role and seen as critically important to developing good citizens in the budding nation. Additionally, certain cultural-nationalist women used access to the greater education, training, and leadership opportunities to move beyond their limited realms. Not only was their own work as mothers and teachers politicized within the context of African womanhood, but tenacious Pan-African cultural-nationalist women drew upon African-centered ideas like *kazi* and *ujamaa* to leverage their positions as educators for creating and extending females’ leadership positions, and developing programs such as communal child care, which helped mothers (and fathers) perform important political work outside the home.

8.1 “Knowledge is the Prime Need of the Hour”: The School of Afroamerican Culture and the Mary McLeod Bethune Institute⁵

It has been noted that Us members’ masculinism, as depicted in the aforementioned *Life* magazine picture, reflected some of the same problems plaguing other movements within the

⁴ Linda K. Kerber, *Toward and Intellectual History of Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 58.

⁵ Subira Kifano quoting Mary McLeod Bethune in her explanation of how Kawaia recognized the urgency of emancipatory education in the Black Freedom Struggle as well as in the larger effort to positively transform society and the world. Kifano, “Promise and Possibilities,” 54-55. The original quote is from Bethune’s “Last Will and Testament,” *Ebony*, August 1995, 105-110.

Black Freedom Struggle, particularly those associated with Black Power formations. Amiri Baraka, Russell Rickford, and Scot Brown have indicated that the initial iteration of Us was highly patriarchal, noting that its organizational philosophy and regulations exceeded the typical sexism of contemporary American life, as well as African gender relations. They also explained that the organization developed what amounted to a cult of personality in relation to Maulana Karenga.⁶ Brown pointed out, however that, despite the paramount importance placed on Karenga's leadership, other male and female Us members played important roles in the organization's operations from its inception. Brown's discussion of women's roles from the earliest days of the Us Organization revealed that women found ways to negotiate and resist the patriarchy so prevalent within the group.

Even within the context of limited gender roles, noted Brown, women were important participants in the early phases of the Us Organization's political existence. Haiba Karenga and Dorothy Jamal, the wives of Us founders Maulana Karenga and Hakim Jamal, organized and administered Us' nascent School of Afroamerican Culture. Additionally, Sanamu Nyeusi taught at the school. Brown asserted that the school was one of the organization's most important institutions, particularly because it served the children of members as well as boys and girls from "nationalist-minded families" throughout Los Angeles. Within a doctrine defining women as

⁶ Amina Thomas (Us) stated that advocates "agreed to let . . . Karenga to dictate our lifestyle at the time" and that the Us leader "had too much power." Confessing his own patriarchal tendencies, Amiri Baraka also indicated that excessive male chauvinism was prevalent in CFUN under his leadership during the Kawaida phases and that the philosophy was particularly flawed in its legitimization of male dominance as "revolutionary." Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 298-300; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 123; Scot Brown wrote that South African associate, Letta Mbulu, indicated Us men had a "naïve or distorted view" of "African" gender relations and wanted to obtain "total control." Brown, *Fighting for US*, 57; Floyd W. Hayes III and Judson L. Jeffries also pointed out that Us' formal institution of female subservience in ritual set it apart from other black liberation movement organizations with records of marginalizing female members, such as the BPP and the SCLC. Floyd W. Hayes III and Judson L. Jeffries, "Us Does Not Stand for United Slaves!" in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 83.

“‘complementary’ rather than ‘equal’ to the supreme status of the Black man,” Us’ School of Afroamerican Culture became one of the larger outlets for Us women’s activism,” wrote Brown.⁷

Former Us members Amina Thomas and Imani Omotayo (pseud.) remembered the School of Afroamerican Culture and their narratives, analyzed along with Subira Kifano’s, indicated that the Us Organization institutionalized and propagated male dominance in its early phases, but that it also changed over time. Thomas additionally emphasized women’s central positions as educators. She suggested women’s important roles in terms of transmitting Pan-African cultural-nationalist values to a new generation of activists. She stated, “The sisters were the teachers in the schools. We taught [the values] to our children more so than the brothers. We can say that.”⁸

Omotayo emphasized that the School of Afroamerican Culture served an important basic function in terms of collective childcare and education. This was because the Us Organization was comprised of young people, many of whom had children. “We were all young people and we all had kids. . . . So, you had to have a school, you really did,” she said. Omotayo observed that the majority of students in the school were the children of organization members.⁹

The Afroamerican School of Culture began as a supplementary educational program in 1967. The institution underwent a name change and transformation of format in 1971, operating for four years as a full-time school under the name *Kawaida* Educational and Development

⁷ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 40-41 & 56.

⁸ Thomas, interview; Omotayo also stated that mostly women directed and taught in the school. Omotayo (pseud.), interview; Naima Olugbala also observed early Us masculinism and women’s resulting resistance, stating that eventually, women like Subira Kifano and Tiamoyo Karenga held important leadership and administrative positions. Olugbala, interview.

⁹ Omotayo (pseud.), interview.

Center.¹⁰ Omotayo explained that the school supported independent and supplementary programs open to children in the lower-income South Central Los Angeles, where it was located. Omotayo further explained, “Children of the community, could come and it was a regular, accredited school and then we had after school, Saturday activities for children [on] weekends.” Omotayo, who helped with poetry and dance classes in the Saturday program, added, “It was just providing a place for kids to come to . . . in the black community.” Administrators charged very little, if any, tuition, and staff and faculty provided students with “fun things to do . . . fed them and gave them some history lessons and classes.” She said neighborhood children “came for the food and . . . a lot of their parents did identify and did like the organization being there because that taught their children to be proud of who they were.” As a result of the school’s presence in South Central LA, Omotayo stated, “I think [the] Us Organization had a large community support in terms of the surrounding community because they were a positive force . . . in the late [19]60’s.”¹¹

Us’ School of Afroamerican Culture also served the role of propagating black-nationalist ideas.¹² As Farmer has pointed out, Us women “developed and taught a new cultural archive for Black youth full of songs, lessons, and activities based in Kawaidist principles” via the school.¹³ While instructors taught students about Pan-African cultural-nationalist values, they also offered programs focusing on academic excellence. Students “learned about Africa and they learned

¹⁰ Subira Kifano, “Afrocentric Education in Supplementary Schools: Paradigm and Practice at the Mary McLeod Bethune Institute,” *Journal of Negro Education* 65 (Spring 1996), accessed January 10, 2016, doi:10.2307/2967314.

¹¹ Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview; Brown cited 1967-1969 as the apex of the Us Organization’s potency and influence. Brown, *Fighting for US*, 132.

¹² Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 12.

¹³ Farmer, “Renegotiating the ‘African Woman,’” 86.

about history and the regular things you're supposed to learn when you're in elementary school but they were also taught cultural things. . . . A major part of their education was *Kawaida*," Omotayo recalled.¹⁴

Omotayo emphasized that educators at the School of Afroamerican Culture provided nourishment for students' bodies and minds in a fun, uplifting environment, and offered a nurturing place for children in a neighborhood needing supportive spaces. She also expressed that, in hindsight, the Us Organization's restrictive, complementary gender roles for boys and girls partially based such functions on an essentialized perspective of so-called "African" traditions. "Because [of] the structure of the organization, there were men that worked with the boys but the boys were taught certain things the girls weren't taught," recalled Omotayo. "They were taught [the] boot dance or they were called the *Simbas*. We had the group called the *Simbas* that were older, but the young boys were taught to be . . . in their words . . . men. . . . So, they kind of tried to do it like you would do it in some parts of the African culture, girls played a different role than boys, so they kind of adopted that."¹⁵

Men operated a weekend school for the *Simba Wachanga*, which began in 1965 after the Watts uprising. In 1967, the Us Organization shifted its program to encompass *Wapinduzi-Wadogo*, "the young or small revolutionaries." A third group of high school and college students formed the core of the Us Organization.¹⁶ Although men in the Us Organization served in the

¹⁴ Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview.

¹⁵ The boot dance consisted of rhythmic movement, clapping, chants, and songs performed by South African workers as early as the 1880s. The word "boot" in the title referred to the rubber footwear South Africans wore in the wet Johannesburg gold mines. Performers vigorously slapped and stomped their boots as they danced and sang. Us Organization members adapted the boot dance steps, lyrics, and music in a Pan-African style. Brown, *Fighting for US*, 133-134; Nicola F. Mason, "The Diversity of African Musics: Zulu Kings, Xhosa Clicks, and Gumboot Dancing in South Africa," *General Music Today* 27 (January 2014): 30-35, doi: 10.1177/1048371313493287; Omotayo indicated that Simbas were teens. Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview.

¹⁶ *Life*, July 15, 1966, cover & 62-63; Karenga, interview, 75-76.

coeducational School of Afroamerican Culture once it was launched, Omotayo recalled they often focused on working with young males. She said, “If you had boys and girls, they took the boys out and did something different with them and then the younger children, of course, met together. But the older children, I think it was more of a separate kind of teaching.” The men encouraged physical stamina, self-confidence, and discipline by teaching boys such practices as military-style drill exercises.¹⁷

Like other independent black institutions, advocates inculcated different, “essentialist and hierarchical” skills and traits in females than in boys and men.¹⁸ Advocates taught preteen and teen girls art, poetry, and dance. “Girls were taught to be submissive . . . even at that young age,” remembered Omotayo. Older women were known as *Mumuninas* and often instructed the girls about what group members deemed as appropriate interpersonal relationships and behavior. “The place of the *Muminina* within the prism of Us’ division of labor and hierarchy was defined by Karenga’s patriarchal formulations on ‘social organization.’ The doctrine stipulated that the role of the woman was ‘to inspire her man, educate the children and participate in social development,’” wrote Brown.¹⁹

Some strictly-gendered practices became less exclusive over time in the Us Organization due to changing circumstances and women’s resistance. However, according to the literature and narratives, Us members enacted multiple, complex perspectives about the roles of women over the years. After the earliest days the organization experienced a period of internal and external conflict, which produced female leaders and ideological changes related to women’s roles in the

¹⁷ Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview.

¹⁸ According to Rickford, black independent institutions had a long history of reinforcing “essentialist and hierarchical notions of ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood’” in pupils. Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 250.

¹⁹ Scot Brown, *Fighting for US*, 56.

Black Freedom Struggle. During this period, adult females were called upon to function as “women soldiers” or *Matamba*, with training activities more like those of the *Simbas*. Women also asserted the right to equality during this period and emerged as group members performing vital committee work at all levels in the organization including in the Circle of Administrators.²⁰

Amina Thomas and Imani Ifetayo’s (pseud.) narratives support Scot Brown’s findings that most former Us advocates wanted to move on from the pain of the past. Imani lamented that her affiliation with the Us Organization was “a bad time.” Kifano recalled being attracted to Us during its post-1975 phase because of Karenga’s intelligence, professionalism, and the accessibility of his ideas.²¹

Kifano’s training as a teacher as well as the fact that she and other members wanted to engage their own children during Soul Sessions guided her activism within the *Kawaida* Groundwork Committee and the reconstituted Organization Us. Kifano’s reflections suggested that women remained essential to rebuilding and sustaining the group’s educational programs. Kifano recalled that, in part, her work with the *Kawaida* Groundwork Committee grew out of a basic necessity. “I planned the educational activities for the children because we’d have Soul Sessions. People [from the community] would bring their children as well as several of the members of the organization had children. I had children. . . . We started as a parent group providing activities. So we’d have child watch, we called it,” she said. Although childcare in a separate space from the main Soul Sessions seemed essential to the parents of young children,

²⁰ Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview; Thomas, interview; “Us: A History of Service, Struggle, and Institution Building,” *Harambee Notes* vol 2.8-2.9 (August /September 1996), accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.us-organization.org/harambee/aug96/augsep96.html#1>; Scot Brown, *Fighting for US*, 56.

²¹ Kifano, interview, December 30, 2010.

Kifano explained that a group of advocates had to organize and articulate the benefit of having a different area for teachers to engage the children at their various learning levels.²²

Kifano added that a group of parents consisting of both women and men advocated for and implemented the childcare and education program. “Rather than the children just sitting there, the parents lobbied or just made the hard point . . . that we needed to have child activities. . . . We, the parents, would just take turns watching them.” Her experiences as an educator and mother, she said, positioned her to become a leader in terms of developing materials and activities for the collective child care program. Other women likewise helped develop the program. For instance, Kweli made the art for the materials that were designed to teach the students about such topics as prominent and heroic African Americans. *Kawaida* Groundwork Committee members working on the program sought to develop in the children a similar kind of “Afro-centric cultural understanding” as their parents were getting in Soul Sessions.²³

Kifano recounted that child care for the Soul Sessions was opened to visitors of the organizational headquarters at the African-American Cultural Center and the program soon overflowed its allotted space and time. The organization’s collective childcare during adult-focused programs eventually developed into a Saturday school. Named Mary McLeod Bethune Institute (MMBI), it was subsequently launched as a supplementary black institution in December 1979. The MMBI was open to the children of Us Organization advocates, while also

²² Kifano, interview, December 30, 2010.

²³ Kifano, interview, December 30, 2010; Kifano, “Promise and Possibilities,” 52.

providing tutoring and literacy support to students in local public and private schools, and assisting youth from the Crenshaw community where it was located.²⁴

Crenshaw was southwest of downtown LA. The district had been a white suburb prior to the Second World War; however, having been the site of struggles over integration, it became a middle-class African-American and Japanese-American neighborhood during the post-war era. After the urban uprisings of the 1960s the area received a tide of black migrants. As a result, multiethnic Crenshaw became known as both an inner-city ghetto as well as a vibrant hub of African-American politics, economics, and culture. The Crenshaw Area of the 1980s developed into one of the largest African-American communities in the western U.S. and came to symbolize an iconic black neighborhood. It was sensationalized in early 1980s and 1990s music, movies, and media as an impoverished, drug-ravaged, and gang-ridden area, although such conditions were not indicative of life in the entire district.²⁵ Crenshaw's demographics explain why the socioeconomic status of MMBI students varied greatly, with 80% hailing from the surrounding three-mile radius and the balance coming from outlying areas or nearby parochial schools. Their parents, who ranged from highly-paid professionals to the unemployed, sought out MMBI to close gaps in their children's education, believing the area schools put insufficient emphasis on African-American history and culture.²⁶

The *Kawaida*-grounded Mary McLeod Bethune Institute was rooted in the *Nguzo Saba* and the curriculum focused on the social sciences. MMBI faculty and staff served twenty-five core students, possibly thousands of additional African-American learners, and provided

²⁴ Kifano, "Promise and Possibilities," 51-52.

²⁵ Scott Kurashige, "Crenshaw and the Rise of Multiethnic Los Angeles," *Afro-Hispanic Review* 27 (Spring 2008): 41-42.

²⁶ Kifano, "Promise and Possibilities," 53 & 59.

outreach via such programs as teacher training for Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and for other local school districts.²⁷ Expressing that LAUSD rarely acknowledged or celebrated Kwanzaa, Kifano said part of her outreach work via MMBI involved developing literature and promoting the observance of the celebration. “I wrote a Kwanzaa book, *Kwanzaa: A Special Holiday*—that outlined all the principles [and] talked about different activities that you could do with your children and family,” she said. Kifano further explained, “I collected . . . black-nationalist songs and shared those with the teachers and so I had a lot of different jobs.”²⁸

Kifano suggested that women’s educational activism supported Us’ work as a vanguard organization focused on wielding “programmatic influence,” particularly through the use of the Seven Principles as core tenets. Karenga stressed that a fundamental part of the organization’s impact was made through the independent school movement. He highlighted the importance of schooling and education when he noted classrooms as key sites of “contestation and struggle.”²⁹ Explaining educators’ importance in advancing the Us Organization’s philosophy and larger Pan-African cultural-nationalist values, particularly among youth, Kifano emphasized teachers’ principle roles in encouraging and motivating learning as well as imparting knowledge. “Maulana Karenga, the chair of the Us Organization advanced the big concept,” she said. “The MMBI director and staff developed the concept to explain the meaning for the children attending the Institute.”³⁰ Kifano’s example shows how important women were to these processes.

²⁷ Kifano, “Promise and Possibilities,” 54 & 65.

²⁸ Kifano, interview, December 30, 2010.

²⁹ Maulana Karenga, interview, 192 & 281. In this interview, Maulana Karenga charts the Us Organization’s educational influence through men.

³⁰ Kifano, “Promise and Possibilities,” 56.

Kifano reported on how the Institute's curriculum exposed children to the accomplishments of both black women and men. One of the school's tenets encouraged "respect for human diversity" and "tolerance." A central point of the credo, which highlighted diversity and asserted the right of individuals and groups to "speak their own special truth and make their own unique contribution to the forward flow of human history." Kifano pointed out that the principle recognized and respected "the human personality manifested in both genders." Using a frame of reference suggestive of *Kawaida* Womanism to support the importance of teaching youth about the ideas and achievements of both African-descended males and females, Kifano drew on the work of Anna Julia Cooper to support assertions about complementarity as a lens for gender-related theorizing and programming.³¹

Kifano reported that the MMBI curriculum stressed exposing children to a balanced treatment of both men's and women's accomplishments. This seemingly more evenhanded approach showed an improvement in *Kawaida*-based theories about the importance of women in the struggle for black freedom. Gone were the 1960s decrees of female domesticity and submissiveness; however, the more recent theories could still be viewed as conservative. Updated ideologies continued to dichotomize masculinity and femininity, promulgating the idea that men and women should uphold different, but interdependent, gender roles. Nevertheless, Kifano penned a declaration stating that, "the new world the Institute struggled to bring into

³¹ Kifano, "Promise and Possibilities," 68; Historian Tsekani Browne asserted that Anna Julia Cooper was both radical and conservative within her context, a description that I believe fits the overall ideology of *Kawaida* Womanism, which drew upon Cooper's thinking. *Kawaida* Womanism represents an improvement of earlier gender roles within the philosophy, but still suggests that women have a restricted "place." Tsekani Browne, "Anna Julia Cooper's Radical Uses of History and Geography, 1892-1925" (conference paper, Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora 8th Biennial Conference, Charleston, SC, November 5, 2015).

being was of necessity non-racist, non-sexist, and non-classist,” which represented progress over the language of the late 1960s and early 1970s.³²

Kifano’s leadership was not limited to the field of education. She had gained organizing experience before joining the *Kawaida* Groundwork Committee and helping reinstate the Organization Us; she had been active in serving the community; and, she functioned as a public speaker, a role which she said Maulana Karenga encouraged her to undertake. While attending Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, she was a member of the institution’s black students’ association called Promotion of Racial Identity, Dignity, and Equality (PRIDE), serving as president for a time. She was theorizing about the miseducation of black students in American schools and proposing independent educational institutions before she joined the *Kawaida* Groundwork Committee. Kifano was an officer in the Black Agenda, an organization founded to promote institutional development and growth in the black community. Over the years, she delivered addresses on a broad range of topics from the socially-oriented, *Jamaa* (Family) series of talks about interpersonal relationships to more political discussions, such as a talk covering the 1983 Grenada coup.³³ Not limited to the role of *house*, Kifano served as co-vice chair of the reconstituted Organization Us and director of the children’s program from the early 1980s until she left in 1997.³⁴

³² Kifano, “Promise and Possibilities,” 71.

³³ Hamline University Yearbook, *The Liner*, 1969, 190; Alethia Parker [sic], “Black Sketches: ‘Oh, Save the Babies,’” *The Oracle* (Hamline University), November 5, 1971, 3; “PRIDE Plans Art Shows,” *The Oracle* (Hamline University), October 13, 1972, 4; “Community Calendar,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 28, 1981, June 25, 1981, & October 20, 1983, A4; “Black Agenda Tells of Upcoming Kwanzaa Fete,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 2, 1993, C2; Virgie Murray, “Black Agenda Installs Officers,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 23, 1982, C11; The Grenada takeover deposed Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, leader of the Marxist-Leninist New JEWEL Movement.

³⁴ Kifano, interview, December 30, 2010; “Us: A History of Service, Struggle and Institution Building.”

8.2 “Education Is the Root of Development [and] Defense”: The African Free School³⁵

Young, African-American teachers, the overwhelming majority of whom were women, led groups of black children, who stood facing the red, black and green banner of Pan-Africanism or played at recess. Others chanted Pan-African nationalist slogans, arms folded, eyes front. Some of the young people smiled, clapping their hands to rhythmic poems. “Red is for the blood of our forefathers which has not been shed in vain. Black is for the color of our faces and the job we must do. Green is for youth and new ideas.” Colorful posters with portrayals of Africa adorned the walls.³⁶ Although depictions of black nationalists commonly feature gun-wielding men or describe writers and performers mired in rhetoric, female educators engaged in the difficult work of nation building, but have received little attention in the literature.³⁷

Both institution-building and education were important sites of struggle for nationalists engaged in the effort to transform black communities. According to Amiri Baraka, “The most revolutionary Afrikans as far as the community will be concerned will be those . . . who can actually run and create schools, and transform the present educational process.”³⁸ In his reflections on his tenure as a CAP member, Michael Simanga confirmed the attractiveness of such operations as the African Free School to new recruits. He stressed how effectively the

³⁵ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

³⁶ Ronald Burns, “Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture,” *Chicago Daily Defender* (Big Weekend Edition), January 23, 1971, 18; Fox Butterfield, “Experimental Class in Newark School is Indoctrinated in Black Subjects,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1971, 42.

³⁷ For a discussion of the idea that 1960s “radical chic” representations focused on revolutionary men, see Salamishah Tillet, “The Panthers’ Revolutionary Feminism,” *New York Times*, October 2, 2015, accessed November 7, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/04/movies/the-panthers-revolutionary-feminism.html?_r=0; For more on the claim that Black Power-era cultural nationalism is often viewed as rhetorical, but Pan-African nationalist schools were a concrete manifestation of such ideology, see Rickford, *We Are an African People*.

³⁸ *The New Nationalism: Kawaida Studies*, 51.

enterprises were managed. CAP's African Free schools stood as concrete manifestations of institution-building, organizational growth, and mass political mobilization. Simanga pointed out that these institutions demonstrated self-determination and independence. Advocates formed several social divisions under the CFUN umbrella as new recruits swelled the organization's ranks. CFUN was divided into many departments and had a web of affiliated programs and enterprises. Education (*Elimu*) was an important department and the African Free School existed as a significant CAP academic institution.

As historian Russell Rickford pointed out, CFUN literature identified Amiri Baraka as the chief policymaker, Amina Baraka was described as the AFS director. She performed much of the administrative as well as the intellectual work of the operation. Through such labor, Amina Baraka pursued central nationalist objectives as the AFS administrator, from seemingly mundane tasks like procuring buildings and furniture, to curriculum development and publicity. CFUN advocates helped develop and run the daily operations of the multiple independent and autonomous African Free School manifestations in Newark.³⁹

Named one of the earliest free public schools in the United States, African Free School's title reflected the institution's mission and its grounding in the history of Long Black Freedom Struggle. The original "African Free School" was founded as a one-room schoolhouse in New York to educate the children of free and enslaved African Americans' children. Although white philanthropists associated with the New York Manumission Society established the original African Free School in 1787, the institution developed into what Rickford defined as a tool for

³⁹ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 138-139; Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 55; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 2 & 135; African Free School Structure, paper, Series V: Congress of African People, 1960-1976: Congress of African People, Organizing Manual, 1972. 1972, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History, Atlanta Fulton Public Library, Archives Unbound, February 5, 2016.

helping achieve black self-determination. A notable group of leaders from Alexander Crummell to Henry Highland Garnet attended the school and became abolitionists, educators, and black nationalists. The twentieth-century AFS had the mission of producing a similar body of liberatory black leaders.⁴⁰

Newark's African Free School grew out of several necessities. Primarily, AFS educators sought to fill local students' learning gaps, developed as a result of shortcomings in the public school system. Additionally, the schools were cultural and political education centers where advocates attempted to re-envision blackness and galvanize change agents within communities consisting mostly of African-descended people. Certain aspects of the African Free School initiatives also addressed the fundamental necessity of collective childcare for advocates and the larger goal of educating a generation of children born to the organization's activist families, as was the case in other *Kawaida*-influenced organizations.⁴¹

The Newark AFS began in the late 1960s. It was first located in the Spirit House, where a group of young people from the neighborhood regularly hung out. The operation functioned as a theater, multipurpose center, office, and residence. Located in a refurbished tenement at 33 Stirling Street within Newark's deteriorated Central Ward, Spirit House was a hub of activity where the Barakas, a growing group of cultural workers, and various community members, organized grassroots political action, held classes, and produced plays and literature. Neighborhood youth performed in productions there, many of which Amiri Baraka had penned specifically for children and teens. They also helped write a newsletter, a task which many found

⁴⁰ Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 299; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 139.

⁴¹ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 139; Simanga, *Amira Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82; Imani Omotayo (pseud.), interview; Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

difficult due to weak writing skills. The Barakas began Spirit House to politicize neighborhood residents and promote the Black Power concept. It soon became clear, however, that residents of the area needed more support.⁴²

Newark's AFS was first called the Community Free School and it operated three days a week as an after-school class serving elementary and middle-school students. The institution quickly grew, expanding to include full-time programs for students as young as three years old. The African Free School ultimately consisted of an independent or "inner" school, featuring a semiautonomous experimental classroom for public school children, infant and preschool facilities, and a youth theater workshop.⁴³

Explaining the driving forces stimulating the growth of AFS infant and preschool programs, Amina Baraka reiterated a common theme in the narratives—that the women who came to Spirit House and, later CFUN, were young and unmarried. Many formed families and gave birth during their time with the organizations. Amina Baraka stated that, joining the movement at a mere 23 years old, she was the eldest among the other Spirit House and CFUN women. "I was the only one with kids in the beginning so I was probably the oldest woman in there and I was in my twenties and young women coming . . . we started to have kids but the women wanted to be active," she continued, emphasizing that the female advocates desired to continue serving in the freedom struggle through all phases of motherhood. Amina led the development of daycare programs and supplemental and independent educational institutions, in

⁴² Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 299; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 135 & 138.

⁴³ Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 299; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 138; African Free School Structure, paper; "African Free School," paper.

part as an answer to their calls for equitable opportunities to participate in various capacities within the movement.⁴⁴

Amina Baraka continued to lead alongside her husband, supervising African Free School's expanding operations during the late 1960s and throughout the early 1970s. The independent branch of AFS moved to CAP's High Street headquarters, then to a separate building on Clinton Avenue. AFS was further enlarged after a grant of federal Title I funds in 1970, which enabled the creation of an experimental classroom at Robert Treat Elementary, the local public school Amina had attended as a child. Robert Treat School had been named after the leader of Newark's first European-descended settlers but community activists renamed the institution honoring black-nationalist leader, Marcus Garvey, in 1971 following Gibson's election.⁴⁵

CFUN advocates broadened AFS operations to challenge the public schools in part because the pace of independent black school formation could not serve the majority of African-American children, who were in public schools.⁴⁶ The idea behind the Robert Treat semiautonomous classroom experiment was to set up a model for reaching the masses of black children in public schools, where they would possibly be for quite some time. Besides offering students the more traditional subjects like reading, African Free School's instructors taught Pan-African nationalist topics such as Swahili, hieroglyphics, and Zulu folklore. Instructors also

⁴⁴ Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

⁴⁵ Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 299-300; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 138; Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; Mumininas, *Mwanamke Mwananchi*, 12; Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2003, "Thirteenth Avenue School," HABS no. NJ-1246, 2 & 15, accessed July 9, 2016, <http://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/nj/nj1700/nj1783/data/nj1783data.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Kifano quoting Carol Lee in "Promise and Possibilities," 46; Rickford, also pointed out that, "Though Pan African nationalists touted institution building as a viable frontier for mass actions, the vast majority of African-American school children remained in public institutions." Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 5 & 7.

imparted a political education for self-determination, emphasized global awareness, and stressed discipline and order. About three teachers worked with approximately thirty students in grades five through eight. Additionally, many of the pupils in the AFS semiautonomous classroom had been labeled chronic slow learners.⁴⁷ “We asked that we take all the kids that [were] failing, all the kids that they were getting ready to expel from school and we put them in one classroom,” Amina Baraka recalled.⁴⁸

The teachers’ work in the AFS classroom was integral to the process of “building a community in the midst of chaos” in Newark’s public school system and to working toward the ultimate goal of constructing a new sense of black peoplehood.⁴⁹ Amina Baraka recounted being driven to assist with developing supplements and independent alternatives to the public school system by family concerns in addition to her worries over the low literacy skills of the neighborhood children. “We had Marcus Garvey, I mean at the time it was Robert Treat. I had [an] incident in there with my two daughters and I used to have to go to school . . . every day and the school was a wreck. It was a mess. It was a wreck when I was in there.”⁵⁰ An article by Cheo Teule titled, “Why is Marcus Garvey Closed?,” shed light on the physical state of the school. The building was located at 131 13th Avenue on the corner of Norfolk and consisted of a core

⁴⁷ “African Free School in Newark,” report; Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012; Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; Burns, “Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture,” 18; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 138, 141, & 142.

⁴⁸ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; Burns, “Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture,” 18.

⁴⁹ The first quoted phrase is taken from a longer statement in which Amiri Baraka stressed that one of the African Free School’s goals was to teach students cooperation in the process of constructing community within their ravaged neighborhood. Burns, “Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture,” 18; The statement about Amina Baraka’s centrality to CFUN/CAP’s goal of helping black Americans “forge a new people” is from Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 139; Michael Simanga also emphasized women’s importance in building CAP’s many programs. Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82.

⁵⁰ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

edifice, constructed in 1888, with a series of additions made between 1891 and 1915. The article's author asserted that Marcus Garvey School had been a positive model of community participation and academic merit since 1969, citing the addition of the African Free School in the same year. The school system, nevertheless, had neglected the building's physical structure like many others in the district, so a Garvey classroom ceiling collapsed in 1972. This incident caused missed instruction days and the relocation of students to eight different facilities.⁵¹

Newark's shifting demographics meant that the student body at Robert Treat had changed from mostly consisting of native-born whites as well as German, Italian, English, and "Hebrew" immigrants in 1906 to 100 percent black by 1969. During the 1960s, the overall district population increased from 55% to 80% African-American students. By 1970, 70% of the city's 402,000 residents were black. Most lived in Central Ward, one of the country's most run-down ghettos and one which had been rocked by riots just three years earlier. Although 50 of the 75 schools in the area were majority-black, there were no African-American principals at the time of the 1967 Newark uprising. The majority of the schools in the district were old, overcrowded, and had been abandoned by the middle-class. The high school dropout rate was high and literacy levels were low. Many of the city's youth had little chance of escaping isolation and poverty in Newark. Activists at Spirit House began to organize within this context, initially leading a charge to oust Robert Treat's white principal.⁵²

The advocates also worked with United Brothers to achieve Kenneth Gibson's election as the first African-American mayor of a major northeastern city and the African Free School

⁵¹ Cheo Teule, "Why is Marcus Garvey Closed?," *Black New Ark*, February 1973, 5; Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, 1-2.

⁵² "Thirteenth Avenue School," 15; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 140; Burns, "Jersey Public School Teaches Classes in African Culture," 18.

semiautonomous classroom was developed as activists won such key battles. Alma Flagg, a Newark public school assistant superintendent who had lobbied for the program, said African Americans living in the city's poorer neighborhoods had developed the feeling that Newark could become a national example of black achievement. Along with other activists, Amiri and Amina Baraka transitioned to open agitation as a method of pressuring administrators to get to the bottom of why children in the neighborhood could not read, as the full range of miseducation at Robert Treat and other area schools became apparent. According to Amina Baraka advocates organized to make a change in the public educational system. They set up the semiautonomous classroom, which was small, but was a prototype for other schools. They also participated in a city-wide African Education Alliance, which lobbied for renaming several Newark public schools after notable black freedom fighters.⁵³

Amina Baraka further explained how she worked alongside other CFUN advocates and community members to achieve more black representation in terms of educational leadership. CFUN advocates and community activists essentially formed pressure groups whose actions swayed the school board to secure the AFS supplemental classroom and elevated movement sympathizer, Eugene Campbell, to the top position at Robert Treat in 1970.⁵⁴ Amina Baraka said,

⁵³ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 140; Burns, "Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture," 18; African Free School, paper; "Positive Votes for New School Names," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 16, 1971, C6.

⁵⁴ Eugene Campbell was one of several founding members of United Brothers, a committee which helped propel involved men and women to local leadership positions. This group included Kenneth Gibson, Newark's first black mayor. Campbell eventually became superintendent of Newark City Schools. Several affiliates became full-time cadres and changed their names when United Brothers came under the CFUN umbrella. According to Woodard, the United Brothers would prove important in Campbell's ascent as a local educational administrator. Woodard listed a number of them in *A Nation within a Nation*. Amina Baraka added the additional information in her self-narrative that Campbell was known as Mkuu in his work with CFUN. Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 89; Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; "Parents Get Their Principal," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 17, 1970, 31; Ernie Johnston, "Committee to Carry on Newark Leader's Goals," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 30, 1980, 3; Eugene Campbell is noted as Mkuu in "Education for Liberation Conference Held Here," *Black New Ark*, November 1972, 1 & 4.

“This one guy, Gene Campbell . . . they called him ‘Mkuu,’ that meant principal in Swahili and [we] put him in Marcus Garvey and we made it possible because he became . . . a principal of that school. So, he let us have an experimental classroom.”⁵⁵ The AFS classroom incorporated an African-centered curriculum, which was meant to serve the neighborhood’s “educationally-deprived” black students.”⁵⁶

Amina Baraka remembered the semiautonomous African Free School as an act of black community self-determination. “We never accepted government funds. We were always leery of accepting government funds because we didn’t want to be under the aegis of the government because you know COINTELPRO was operating heavy and we knew the minute we spent one dime that was not on charts that they [were] coming for us. So, we had our own bookkeepers,” she recalled.⁵⁷ To be sure, news articles reported that intense community interest brought AFS into fruition.⁵⁸ Yet, Rickford pointed out that in terms of funding, AFS was “one of the more generously subsidized Pan-African nationalist institutions of the day,” revealing contradictions between AFS officials’ strong sentiments about autonomy and their dependence on subsidies, grants, and external private donations. Nevertheless, he indicated they remained steadfast in implementing African-centered school programs and continued to lodge critiques of public education as it existed.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁵⁶ Burns, “Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture,” 18

⁵⁷ COINTELPRO stood for the FBI covert Counterintelligence Program, which operated from 1956 until 1971. Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012; Federal Bureau of Investigation, “FBI Records: The Vault: COINTELPRO,” accessed February 21, 2017, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro>.

⁵⁸ Ronald Burns, “Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture,” 18.

⁵⁹ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 139.

Amina Baraka felt strongly about African Free School's successes. She said, "We did pretty good." She stated, "We finally got a building [that] we wanted to move into." She added that advocates moved into the realm of "public education to see if we could affect what was going on in public schools."⁶⁰ With its red, black, and green liberation flag flying high, African Free School received commendations and support from the community and even from establishment sources. The school won recognition for its inventive curriculum from the Model Cities Project Class Room program, which awarded the semiautonomous African Free School a \$1,020.00 grant in 1971.⁶¹ The AFS also received a letter of endorsement from Congressman William L. Clay of Missouri, advising New Jersey state officials to allocate appropriate levels of Title I funds for the program.⁶² AFS was accredited by the New Jersey Education Association as an elementary school and had graduates who progressed to high school.

Extraordinarily, AFS educational activists were able to achieve successes despite the overall political environment. The Newark public schools were in crisis, particularly as they were struck by viciously divisive teacher strikes during the early 1970s. The local conflict involved the majority-white teacher's union, which invoked collective bargaining rights against the board of education and numerically-significant groups of black parents working with community activists, in a similar situation to New York's Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggle for community control of schools. In the midst of the battles, CFUN leaders and advocates faced accusations of race baiting to advance their own political agenda. CFUN activists, however, condemned both the union and the African-American and Latino school board members,

⁶⁰ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁶¹ "African Free School in Newark," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 24, 1971, D3.

⁶² "NJ School Endorsed by Solon," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 24, 1971, D1; Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 300.

accusing the committee of behaving like neocolonial compradors, or using their intermediary, middle-class status to obstruct Newark's black working class from gaining power.⁶³

Although the African Free School's growth was but one example of black Newark citizens' ability to affect change in their city, ultimately the class of black officials who grew more influential and powerful in the aftermath of the political gains of the late 1960s and early 1970s failed to effectively address urban blight and other dire social and economic issues. Mayor Kenneth Gibson had once been invested with the hope of constituents seeking to experience a break in the color and class lines demarcating urban politics in the North but ended up an ineffectual bureaucrat unable to assist (or disinterested in facilitating) the transfer of power and resources to Newark's black and brown working-class citizens.⁶⁴

Within Newark's challenging 1970s political environment, noted Rickford, AFS remained a priority for its organizers. The school was open to the offspring of CFUN advocates and served neighborhood youth as well. Most of the students from the community were underprivileged. The activists built relationships with parents and grew invested in helping the children succeed.⁶⁵ Amina Baraka explained:

They [were] kids in the neighborhood. [We] didn't really have to look for them. The parents were cooperative. They were glad to have somewhere that the kids could go and find to do something positive. We didn't have any applications, in the beginning we didn't. Later on we did have applications but in the beginning, it was just kids off the block. . . . A lot of them used to travel around, especially the male kids, they used to travel around with Amiri. He would take them

⁶³ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 140-141; Compradors are defined as relatively wealthy, educated, and elite native residents of a colony who are considered to be bought off by the colonizers and, therefore, less willing to struggle for local independence; Woodard explains that the ultimate critique of many black officials who came to power through the Modern Black Convention Movement as "agents for white racism" developed from Amiri Baraka's growing socialist theorizing of Newark as a case of internal colonialism turned neocolonialism. Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 251 & 254.

⁶⁴ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 140.

⁶⁵ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 140; *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* 1984 version, 243-244, 247, & 300.

different places and have [plays] and it was like an extended family kind of thing.⁶⁶

Amiri Baraka recalled that Amina served an important role in developing relationships with other neighborhood women, particularly through block associations, which forged common bonds and “mutual support” networks between advocates and community residents. Additionally, historian Kevin Mumford noted Amina’s important leadership role in reforming the school’s curriculum. Amina organized the AFS parents as part of her administrative role. She required their involvement in the school’s activities. AFS students’ parents would also lobby the Board of Education, especially when it came to the lack of representation for the overwhelmingly-black student body at Robert Treat School.⁶⁷

Operating the African Free School was challenging and, although men played significant roles, the mostly-female staff was integral to the school’s daily functioning. One challenging aspect of running the institution was that it was always in need of funds. AFS was tuition free and relied on tens of thousands of dollars generated from grants, private donations, CFUN workers’ dues, parental volunteerism, and the staff’s fundraising efforts.⁶⁸ The pay at AFS was so low that teachers had to find supplemental employment. “You’ve got to remember these were young college students in the beginning and we lived collectively and we did everything collectively but as they got older and started to have children of their own and responsibilities,” Amina Baraka explained, “they had to seek work outside the organization.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; The male teacher was Ngoma Hill, who served as a music instructor. Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁶⁷ *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* 1984 version, 247 & 300; Kevin J. Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America*, 188.

⁶⁸ Amiri Baraka, *Authobiography*, 300; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 139.

⁶⁹ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

Fundraising added to the AFS staff's long list of duties. Amina Baraka recounted, "We had little ice trucks, with the ice on them [for] snow balls and so in the summer, we would do that and the money would all go into African Free School." She also pointed out that CFUN advocates did much to help raise money. "We had all types of programs and things that would supplement the school that was coming from the Congress of African People, not so much from the community. . . . We had a lemonade stand and then some of the kids, I think they were selling *Unity and Struggle*," she stated.⁷⁰ A paper outlining the African Free School structure supported Amina Baraka's memories, indicating that the school's economic organization was aimed at achieving self-reliance, with fundraising efforts in the areas of literature sales and a food vending enterprise.⁷¹

The African Free School was viewed within the movement as a practical, institutionalized method of addressing the urban crisis in education.⁷² Amina Baraka's memories help explicate the role of foot soldiers like the AFS staff. Workers at AFS cared for the basic needs of the economically-deprived and socially-marginalized children of Newark's Central Ward in addition to teaching them to re-envision themselves as a unified, upstanding, self-determining, hardworking, purpose-filled, creative, and faithful people. For instance, teachers helped students with self-care, assembling kits of basic hygiene products for them while attempting to create an environment in which the students from more impoverished backgrounds were not singled out and all would feel included. Amina Baraka explained:

The children . . . we made sure that they had a little bag they had to carry that we used to just find from the Army-Navy store. In the bag was a toothbrush,

⁷⁰ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁷¹ African Free School Structure, paper.

⁷² Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 259.

toothpaste, a hair comb, Vaseline, a washcloth, soap and so, when they came into school, the first thing they did after they recited the *Nguzo Saba* [was] go into the washroom. We didn't care if they had just gotten out the tub, but that was to keep other children, who didn't have that, from feeling like they were different, so we made them go through that process and then they'd come back and sit down and we'd have classes.⁷³

Because some of the students faced such formidable economic challenges, AFS staff had to assist them with obtaining essential parts of their outfits. "We had uniforms, because . . . we could see the kids were dressed differently and some of them had on new clothes, some of them had on old clothes. Some of them had on mostly no clothes and so we had green tee-shirts, black pants, and . . . we did buy them shoes."⁷⁴ Even the students' school uniforms served as tools in the struggle to educate urban black students in spite of the odds they faced.

AFS teachers did more than teach, raise funds, and care for children's basic needs. Farmer has pointed out that women in the Us Organization instructed black youth, developing a new cultural archive in the process. This innovative collection consisted of songs, chants, lesson plans, activities, and teaching materials based in *Kawaida* principles, some of which are still used today.⁷⁵ This author asserts that, like the women in the Us Organization, AFS teachers also contributed to enlarging the cultural archive for young African Americans during the Black Power Movement.⁷⁶ When discussing the development of the AFS curriculum, Amina Baraka

⁷³ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁷⁴ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁷⁵ The term "cultural archive" is from Farmer, "Renegotiating," 86. Farmer seems to use the term to mean historical media, oral traditions, activities, and educational materials which provide information about Kawaida-influenced practices and ideas. This author observed Subira Kifano teaching youth and drawing from the Kawaida-influenced cultural archive during Kwanzaa celebrations when conducting research for this dissertation. Additionally, this author observed the imprint of both women and men affiliated with the East Organization in works meant for popular consumption, like Maitefa Angaza, *Kwanzaa: From Holiday to Everyday* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2007), ii & 129-130.

⁷⁶ Farmer, "Renegotiating," 86.

declared, “Our liberation school was run by all the women. The men [were] off doing other things but it was organized by us, we wrote the curriculum.”⁷⁷

Amina Baraka’s narrative illustrated how women, in their roles as educators, pioneered teaching materials that imparted *Kawaida*-influenced values, as well as larger Black Power values, aimed at culturally transforming a new generation of African Americans. “We had stories that we wrote. I wrote one story called *Coal Black and the Seven Simbas*.” Amina Baraka stated. Drawing from such groups as the Grandassa models, she showed how a simple children’s story like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* could be inverted to teach a basic Black Power tenet like self-love. She continued, “We went through the regular Grimm’s fairy tales and . . . we realized how we had been brainwashed and how black was not quite beautiful in those tales. . . . We rewrote them. . . . We would laugh at how we had been brainwashed, so we decided to reverse it.”⁷⁸

The kinds of stories AFS staff developed for the students not only enlarged the Pan-African nationalist and Black Power cultural archives for children, they also filled the need for more stories focusing on African-descended people and speaking to their experiences. Moreover, Pan-African nationalist tales counteracted depictions like the animated film, “Coal Black and the Sebben Dwarfs,” which was so rife with racial stereotypes that it had recently been put on a list of offensive cartoons.⁷⁹ Providing more details about the story she wrote for AFS, Amina Baraka

⁷⁷ Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

⁷⁸ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; Amina Baraka recounted that the Simbas in the story were given the names and attributes of certain male advocates.

⁷⁹ Author Jaime J. Weinman explained the fact that filmmaker Bob Clampett’s 1943 animated piece, “Coal Black and the Sebben Dwarfs,” was “a catalogue of every racial stereotype in 1940s cinema.” The film appeared on the “Censored Eleven,” a list of offensive cartoons that broadcasters would not televise by the 1960s. Weinman argued audiences should have been able to access the film and laugh at the stereotypes while considering historical context. I assert that the film, and the subsequent debate over its appropriateness, provide further confirmation of how important a holistic approach to the Black Freedom Struggle was, including cultural work. Weinman claimed that

recalled, “In place of Snow White, it was Coal Black. . . . When Coal Black looked in the mirror, it spoke back to her in a Black voice saying . . . ‘Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the most beautiful of them all?’ And the mirror responded, ‘Coal Black is where it’s at.’” Amina Baraka explained the African Free School teachers wrote several such books.⁸⁰ She said there was a dearth of literature with positive depictions of central black characters available to the teachers at the time, suggesting the desire to place African Americans at the center of their own school’s literature while helping their literacy practices and re-educating them about their personal value. “I think we had an effect on the community . . . consciousness in terms of the tradition of black people. . . . It was alright to be Coal Black, you no longer had to be Snow White. It was alright and you [were] beautiful,” she offered as a final assessment.⁸¹

Some of the AFS educators contributing to the *Kawaida* cultural archive were among the more progressive CFUN women who stood with Amina Baraka and lobbied for the expansion of women’s roles in Pan-African cultural nationalism, including Jaribu Hill, Jalia Woods, Salimu Rogers, and Staarabisha [Lydia] Barrett. Hill and Woods served on the Woman Question Commission for a short time, helping chairperson, Amina Baraka, research, write, and critique

the film was “good-natured,” particularly in its use of black actors for the voice-overs. While black actors might have found rare acting jobs via the film, they were unable to control the way their culture was depicted onscreen. Negative onscreen stereotypes were not only reflections of prevalent values within the dominant culture, they influenced how black people were perceived and treated as well as how they saw themselves, and each other, in the real world. Consumption of popular culture shapes viewers’ understanding of individuals’ places in society. Although it never reached as broad an audience as Clampett’s cartoon, cultural nationalists’ work sought to counter such dynamics and the AFS women’s story represented a small-scale disruption of practices that usurped African-descended people’s ability to control their own cultural images. Jaime J. Weinman, “The Best Cartoon You’ve Never Seen: A Banned Masterpiece Retells the Story of Snow with an All-Black Cast,” *Maclean’s* 119, no. 13, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, March 27, 2006; Erin Crews, “What Will it Take to Fix Hollywood’s Race Problem?,” *Georgia State University*, accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.gsu.edu/2016/02/22/a-look-behind-the-oscar-curtain/>.

⁸⁰ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁸¹ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

the “Woman Question” essay. Woods and Staarabisha Barrett went on to assume leadership roles in the women’s division, which eventually assumed a vanguard position within CFUN. Barrett had been a founding member of United Sisters. Besides being a freedom singer, trainer, and community organizer, Hill served as a leader of the women’s circle, which developed programs such as the African Women’s Conference. Amina Baraka and Jaribu Hill also became members of the CAP Political Council. Other AFS teachers included *Mumininas* Akiba, Ibura, Jalia, Anasa, and Furaha.⁸²

Muminina Jalia was from Dayton, Ohio and came to CFUN from Kalamazoo College. While in Newark, she served as AFS’ principal. Jalia also penned the “Monthly Swahili Lesson” in *Black New Ark* as an extension of her role as an educator. She sometimes devoted short paragraphs of the column to her views on the importance of African Americans’ adherence to Pan-African cultural-nationalist values.⁸³ For instance, Jalia exhorted readers “to identify with our culture, our traditional greatness. Self-determination manifests itself in the language that a person speaks.”⁸⁴ *Muminina* Jalia’s column indicated that women’s roles as educators were often

⁸² Farmer, *Renegotiating*, 90 & 97; Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 126; “The Woman Question: Black Women and the Struggle,” n.p.; Woman Question Commission-Sum Up, notes, Series X: Revolutionary Communist League, 1974-1982: Revolutionary Communist League, Women Question And Other Position Papers, 1977, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History, Atlanta Fulton Public Library, Archives Unbound, February 23, 2016, “CAP General Assembly,” *Unity and Struggle*, November 1974, 10; Hill, interview; Hill pointed out that the African Women’s Conference was Amina Baraka’s brainchild and Simanga confirmed this claim. Simanga went a step further, noting that Amina took no leadership role in either the Conference or either Black Women’s United Front, but trained and supported other women, like Hill, in directing both programs. Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 84.

⁸³ Photograph, *Black New Ark*, October 1973, 2; Photograph, “Bullet Holes,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 11, 1973, 2; Photograph, *Black New Ark*, October 1973, 2; M. Jalia, “Monthly Kiswahili Lesson,” *Black New Ark*, January 1973, 2.

⁸⁴ M. Jalia, “Monthly Kiswahili Lesson,” *Black New Ark*, April 1973, 7.

politicized and that some AFS educators leveraged the *kazi* they performed in their feminized teaching roles to reach audiences beyond the classroom.

Komozi Woodard's recollections about *Muminina* Anasa indicated that African Free School teachers were politically active and astute. He indicated witnessing diminishing numbers of female activists in the Newark SNCC chapter with which he was affiliated before joining CFUN. Investigating the situation, Woodard recounted dropping in on a local CFUN Soul Session one Sunday where he saw Anasa. He said Anasa had also been in SNCC, but challenged him to join CFUN and become a Young Lion [*Simba*] if he was a "real man." Woodard said, "In many ways, the sisters were the ones who were challenging you to take on the serious commitment of what they were calling nation building back then." So, I would have to say that Anasa . . . really spurred me to make my decision" to join CFUN.⁸⁵

AFS teachers used their teaching positions as training grounds and platforms for political expression in other areas as well as for developing their leadership skills. *Muminina* Furaha served as an administrator at the African Free Schools at Robert Treat and at the Spirit House. "Furaha was actually the Swahili teacher," Amina Baraka explained. "She was an actress by profession and she dropped everything and never went back to it."⁸⁶ According to Woodard, *Muminina* Furaha came to New Jersey to help establish the Spirit House Movers and Players and had left the San Francisco Black Arts West to do so.⁸⁷ Amina Baraka recounted, "[Furaha] was also part of [the] *Malaika* Singers. She actually became . . . part of the directors of the Spirit House, the theater group that we had." Considering the ways the women who staffed AFS were

⁸⁵ Komozi Woodard, interview by author, July 24, 2013.

⁸⁶ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁸⁷ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 133.

politically-driven and had sacrificed their personal ambitions to join the movement, Amina Baraka contemplated, “I guess we all were basically artists . . . and my ambition was to be in theatre, and I was a dancer and none of us went back to what we [were] really doing.”⁸⁸

Even the decision to include an AFS daycare offering was an outgrowth of CFUN women’s political work. The female activists bore what Woodard characterized as an added burden of family responsibilities. Their determination to take part in the political work of the movement resulted in the formation of a 24-hour AFS nursery for CAP families. The center represented the women’s effort to institutionalize collective child rearing. Amiri Baraka wrote that she thought such a center would provide the best way to lighten the childrearing burdens of women as well as men for performing more political work.

The 24-hour daycare program helped advocates, who were often away from their children as they put in long hours of political work. The women staffing the daycare worked shifts so the children could be dropped off and picked up at any time. Amina Baraka explained, “When we gave conferences and conventions and stuff, that’s when the daycare was really good for the women. . . . The people who had to do the daycare center, we rotated so that all the women could be active at any given time. . . . There would be women in the daycare for two or three days or weekends or so forth and the rest of us would be where the conference was, doing what we had to do.”⁸⁹

Amina Baraka was interested in developing the center because of her concerns over the tendency to exclude women from political work in *Kawaida*-influenced organizations. She wanted to eradicate *Kawaida* practices that limited women to the fringes of the movement in the

⁸⁸ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁸⁹ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

realms of social organization, teaching the children, and supporting the agendas of their male associates, lovers, and husbands. She spearheaded institutional modifications to facilitate women's appointment to other organizational departments, which dealt with politics, economics, and the arts.⁹⁰

In addition to the African Free School's independent, semiautonomous classroom, and daycare programs, the CFUN women's division established the Teacher Training Institute to assist other black educators. The Institute was aimed at making AFS' methods accessible to African-American instructors across the country. African Free School institutions also served as models for other nationalists developing independent educational institutions. Jamala Rogers explained how WATU (CAP St. Louis) developed a small daycare service. WATU advocates were prepared to broaden it into an independent African Free School branch before Newark CAP leadership decided to focus on reforming public schools.⁹¹

Rogers explained that the WATU daycare originated as a resource for community members attending classes at the St. Louis *hekalu*. She also described the main purpose of the program. "We had onsite childcare at our *hekalu* so that it freed up the women to do some of the political work," Rogers stated. She also explained how the CAP practice of institutionalized communal daycare for busy activists with children has impacted present political organizing efforts. "Even now," Rogers said, "the organizations that I'm a part of, we really try to always have childcare so that women can participate because I always saw it as an important role for [an] organization who said that they were committed to full participation by women and if one of

⁹⁰ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 135; Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82; Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 300.

⁹¹ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 135; African Free School, paper; Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 55; Rogers, interview.

the things is, ‘I don’t have a babysitter,’ then you should be building that in to the organizational practices to provide childcare.⁹²

Like the students at other *Kawaida*-influenced Pan-African nationalist independent black institutions, students at the African Free School also affectionately called teachers and older advocates “mama,” as a practice of reinforcing community values and performing *ujamaa* (familyhood). “We never referred to ourselves as teachers. We always referred to ourselves as mother, ‘mama.’ . . . People started calling us mama everywhere we went,” Amina Baraka explained. Furaha said to a reporter in 1971, “We are like their parents. . . . We want it to be like their family . . . not dry and distant like the usual school. So we stress parental respect and we insist that their parents show up for a session [at the African Free School] once a week.”⁹³

Although stressing that such “parental respect” could be read as enforcement of conformity, the women described practices aimed at connecting CFUN advocates as an extended family to members of their Newark community, and one suggesting similarities of custom between a larger network of *Kawaida*-influenced Pan-African nationalist organizations.⁹⁴ Amina Baraka said that she still encounters students from the African Free School, who often warmly inquire, “How’s Mama Furaha? How’s Mama Asali?”⁹⁵ The narratives collected for this

⁹² Rogers, interview; Rogers is currently a leader of the Organization of Black Struggle, which she cofounded in 1980. A longtime St. Louis community organizer she served as an advisor to local Ferguson protestors in the aftermath of the police slaying of unarmed black teen, Michael Brown, in August 2014. Stephen Deere, “Ferguson Protesters Disagree Over Who Should Receive Donations,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 4, 2015, Newspaper Source database; Jamala Rogers, *Ferguson Is America: Roots of Rebellion* (St. Louis: Mira Digital Publishing, 2015), IX-XIV.

⁹³ Burns, “Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture,” 18.

⁹⁴ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 142.

⁹⁵ Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; Burns, “Jersey Public School Teaches Class in African Culture,” 18; This author witnessed various individuals in Newark referring to Amina and Amiri Baraka as “Mama” and “Pops” with a mixture of affection and reverence.

dissertation contain a common theme: They place community “mamas” at the heart of independent school programs and practices, functioning as what Rickford termed “embryos of the coming nation,” in which black children’s lives mattered.⁹⁶

The practice of calling teachers “mamas” also revealed that schools were an extension of women’s roles as the mothers and first teachers of the nation. “Just as the mother must set a certain image so should the teacher because they are inseparable. The teacher’s role is the role of the mother,” stated an *Amsterdam News* article about African Free School.⁹⁷

In this way, *Kawaida*-based Afrikan womanhood resembled the concept of Republican Motherhood mentioned earlier. According to Rickford, the cultural-nationalist focus on instilling values in students enhanced female teachers’ status. This elevated rank seemed to partially rest upon the level of *kazi* required of the educators. Expected to possess the will to work around the clock if necessary, the AFS nationalist teacher was not only accountable for curriculum design, research, text development, and using “correct and innovative” instructional methods, she was also responsible for developing “high consciousness and being aware of her identity, purpose, and direction.”⁹⁸ “Women were primary bearers of morality and social ethics in cultural nationalism’s world view,” Rickford wrote. “Since achieving nationhood was thought to require systematic transmission of such knowledge, women were seen as essential agents of national formation.” Rickford added that the enhanced status of female teachers in black-nationalist schools was complicated. In one way, the role was predicated on women’s continued

⁹⁶ Kifano, “Promise and Possibilities,” 44; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 12; This author added the term “in which black children’s lives mattered.”

⁹⁷ “African Free School Has Own Methodology,” D1.

⁹⁸ “African Free School Structure,” paper; “African Free School Has Own Methodology,” D1; Rickford opined that “independent institutions demanded of their staff nothing less than missionary zeal.” Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 243.

“willingness to accept male authority.” Additionally, as in Republican Motherhood, the work of teachers in *Kawaida*-influenced independent black schools was often viewed as an extension of their domestic roles as African women and remained relatively separate from and more feminized than typically-masculine roles in the freedom struggle.⁹⁹

Beyond the teachers themselves, *Kawaida*-influenced schools were sites of women’s politicization. Teacher-administrators were activists in that their work was part of the larger process of black nationality formation. At African Free School, students were not only taught the standard subjects of history, geography, visual and language arts, science, mathematics, health and physical education; they were also shaped into the next generation of nationalists.¹⁰⁰ Instructors, whose numbers were overwhelmingly female, found the school a place to perform political work within acceptable gender norms according to *Kawaida*’s earliest expressions and according to certain mores, norms, training, and education women brought to the organization from mainstream society as well. Moreover, the process of forming the African Free School was the initial point of attraction for many women to the organization. Woodard wrote that female activists “gathered around Amina Baraka to discuss black liberation and African culture as she established the African Free School at the Spirit House in 1967.”¹⁰¹ Schools were also places where women could be politically active as well as training grounds for female leaders, businesspeople, and for the development and encouragement of high levels of education among girls and women.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 141-142.

¹⁰⁰ African Free School Has Own Methodology,” D1; “African Free School in Newark,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 24, 1971, D3; “NJ School Endorsed by Solon,” D3.

¹⁰¹ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 88.

¹⁰² Rickford also pointed out that the gendered roles within *Kawaida*, which specified women should perform the essential tasks of “Afrikan womanhood,” ironically enabled activists such as Amina Baraka (CFUN), Tayari kwa

The Black Power experiment in Newark was in decline by 1974. The funding for not only the African Free School, but other CFUN programs, was withdrawn as the overarching urban renewal project for neighborhood development, NJR-32 Project Area Committee (PAC), became mired in the corruption of Newark's "bureaucratic red tape and legal malaise." NJR-32 PAC programs were dismantled, and the Newark Housing Authority demolished the buildings where they were headquartered, including the African Free School. These events coincided with growing ideological divisions within CAP. The Congress of African People shifted to "national communism" as the Barakas' critiques of Pan-African cultural nationalism grew into outright rejection. Woodard wrote that CAP advocates believed the Black Power Movement "died at the hands of traitorous black elected officials," and Amiri Baraka charged that internal colonialism in the United States had transformed into neocolonialism. By 1976 the Black Women's United Front was torn apart by "sectarian conflicts." According to Woodard, Amiri Baraka's embrace of cultural nationalism was a key factor in developing Black Power; thus, his rejection of the philosophy can be viewed as a turning point in the movement's demise.¹⁰³

Jaribu Hill's reflections indicated that just as the African Free School drew female advocates to Newark, its demise amidst the changing tides of the Barakas' ideologies pushed activists away from CFUN/CAP. Although Hill cited that changes both inside and outside the organization prompted her to leave, she also said, "One of the most challenging aspects of working with CFUN/CAP was abandoning the independent school work for that of the public school." Hill believed the leadership should have continued their educational struggle on

Salaam (Ahidiana), and step into leadership positions as top administrators and curriculum developers. Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 155; Margaret A. Nash, "Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 171-172 & 191.

¹⁰³ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 253-254.

multiple fronts, particularly since certain AFS offerings assisted women in Newark's Central Ward. "Some of the parents had come to rely on the preschool that we had and once we closed that, we lost some momentum," she lamented. Hill continued, "Not totally, but I think there was a certain amount of disappointment in the community when we didn't continue that preschool program, which was dire for a number of women who needed that childcare so that they could go to work." Suggesting that her time at AFS and in CFUN/CAP influenced the organizing and activism that would characterize Hill's life work in other areas, she said, "Our thinking, of course, was that we definitely needed to focus on public school because that's where the majority of our children were and are, and that frames my position to this day."¹⁰⁴

Looking back, Amiri Baraka cited African Free School as one of the most important endeavors of CFUN and CAP's social organization. He said the school represented a high level of accomplishment and was influential not only in Newark but throughout the country. It had multiple programs and served as a model and training resource for independent black schools throughout the nation. Kevin Mumford's assessment of the work Newark advocates performed aptly sums up their influence. Mumford wrote that the activists' work radicalized a part of the African-American community, which Civil Rights leaders had not been able to galvanize. Though Mumford focused mostly on Amiri Baraka's leadership, it is important to note that the women associated with Spirit House and the African Free School educational programs were part of the process of influencing and energizing Newark's black community as well.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Hill, interview.

¹⁰⁵ Kevin J. Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America*, 119-12.

8.3 “Freedom Now”: *Uhuru Sasa School*

Operating from 1970-1986, Brooklyn's *Uhuru Sasa Shule* educated hundreds of children and was the longest-running, most influential independent black institution included in this study. A renewed sense of cultural awareness emanating from the struggles of the 1960s sparked a resurgence of nationalist sentiment, which was often expressed as separatist inclinations within African-American communities. Such impulses toward independent institution building combined with a series of clashes with New York City public school educators and bureaucrats led to the creation of *Uhuru Sasa* as an independent black institution in 1970.¹⁰⁶

A group of educators at New York City's Junior High School 271 began an evening school in September of 1968, during the Ocean Hill Brownsville uprising, to provide classes and instruction for youth and adults in Brooklyn. Teachers and administrators offered courses covering a variety of topics community members deemed useful, from dance to black history and sewing. Weusi exclaimed, “This told us that if we could do this, and it could be successful, that we could, in fact, develop our own types of schools!” Two years after the Ocean Hill-Brownsville dispute was over, the group developed several programs including *Uhuru Sasa Shule*, an independent black institution in Brooklyn.¹⁰⁷

Adeyemi Bandele recalled conditions in the community, which produced *Uhuru Sasa* and the larger East Organization. ASA “initially developed as an . . . evening school program so that the high school students could, in fact, work and then come and take classes that were offered by members of the African American Teachers Association (ATA),” he said. “That grew to the extent where we just saw the need for the establishment of our own, independent school.”

¹⁰⁶ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 20 & 244-245; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 107-108, 112.

¹⁰⁷ Campbell, interview.

Bandele went on to discuss some of the adult programming. He also explained that organization members ran an afterschool program and developed a program designed to re-educate and train teachers who wanted to work within the independent school system. He emphasized that the programs of the ATA and ASA led to the establishment of *Uhuru Sasa* School as well as The East's cultural and education center.¹⁰⁸

In his narrative, Bandele discussed various roles women played in *Uhuru Sasa*. According to his recollection, a few women served on the leadership council. He also pointed out that a woman [Ante Brown] directed the primary school. It should be noted, however, that Bandele recalled male leadership in the middle and high schools while Martha Bright stated that she was a middle-school coordinator. Bright also remembered that she and Ayanna Johnson served in leadership positions in the *Uhuru Sasa* high school. Despite Bright's recollections of women's service in limited leadership positions, Bandele emphasized that women were primarily teachers within the institution. Sixty to seventy percent of *Uhuru Sasa*'s teachers were women according to Bandele's estimation.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ In 1972, the preschool was at 10 Claver Place. The high school was on Bedford Avenue until 1974. The middle school was around the corner on Fulton Street near the Mavazi shop. Another school location opened in the Gowanus Projects on Bond Street. It later moved to a storefront on Rockaway Boulevard across from housing projects in Brownsville. Martha Bright in Angela Weusi, et al., OJBK Radio, podcast audio, October, 11, 2014; Bright, interview, June 24, 2013, part 2 of 2; Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 15; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 107-108.

¹⁰⁹ Adeyemi Bandele, interview; Bright remembered that Ayanna Johnson left *Uhuru Sasa* to find employment at Weusi Shule (later Johnson Preparatory School), a fact which was confirmed in the "Family Schools Newsletter" in *Black News*. Kina Joshua-Jasmine of New Orleans also mentioned Ayanna Johnson as a woman who headed independent Black institutions in New York City, possibly because Johnson travelled across the nation and abroad as an organizer of IBIs in her capacity as business meetings chair of the New York Family Schools, the CIBI New York regional chapter. Bright, interview; Kalamu ya Salaam, interview; "Family Schools Newsletter," *Black News*, 3 no. 23 (May 1978): 15; Mama Lubaba Ahmed was headmistress of Brooklyn's *Uhuru Sasa* in 1980. Rashida Kierstedt succeeded Lubaba in 1983. Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 251 & 256; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 111.

Akili Walker, a student and instructor at *Uhuru Sasa* during his teen years, confirmed that women played important roles as educators and mentors who reinforced and extended nationalist values. A precocious teen, Walker was a fifteen-year-old dropout because he became “bored” and “disillusioned” with the public school system. After an independent academy in Massachusetts denied him admission, Walker gained acceptance at *Uhuru Sasa*. After a year of taking courses in math, science, English, black culture and history, Kiswahili, and self-defense at *Uhuru Sasa*, administrators invited him to teach boys aged three to six.

Specifically highlighting women’s integral roles in training him as a new teacher, Walker said, “The women and the sisters of the East were very influential in the curriculum and training the teachers in the school.” Expounding on how experienced teachers educated new instructors, he said, “At *Uhuru Sasa*, the school was accredited but not all of the teachers had teaching degrees. So, the teachers that did have degrees would teach the [un]credentialed teachers like myself.” Walker explained the older, more experienced educators covered topics from lesson plans to classroom management. “We used to have teacher training classes on Saturdays and I learned from the sisters how to go about becoming a teacher.”¹¹⁰

Adeyemi Bandele speculated that two factors influenced the fact that the majority of *Uhuru Sasa*’s faculty and staff was comprised of females. Both elements related to the central roles women played in Brooklyn’s struggle for community control.¹¹¹ First, the public educational system’s faculty was likewise composed of a greater number of women than men. Many of those teachers decided to work within the experimental district and, later, *Uhuru Sasa*

¹¹⁰ Walker, interview; Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 15-16; Lesly Jones, “Uhuru Sasa Shule Says Family Must Re-Educate,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 15, 1972, B1; The Uhuru Sasa Shule’s curriculum is also listed in Konadu, *A View from the East*, 165.

¹¹¹ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 117.

school.¹¹² These instructors, he stated, were professionals, skilled at building and sustaining independent institutions. The teachers trained other instructors and taught students in the experimental district as well as the independent school. According to Jitu Weusi, such educators were not preoccupied with issues like compensation, as were the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) members, who went on strike during the Ocean Hill-Brownsville conflict. Many *Uhuru Sasa* teachers were affiliated with the ATA and focused more on improving the quality of education and providing overall better opportunities for black and brown children.¹¹³ According to Tamisha Peterson, *Uhuru Sasa*'s employees' dedication to transforming the nature of education for the entire community sustained them, especially since they "weren't getting paid a whole bunch."¹¹⁴

In addition to discussing the influence of the teachers from New York City public schools, Adeyemi Bandele highlighted a second factor, which was that some of the concerned

¹¹² Theorists do not agree about the exact reason or date the teaching field came to be considered women's work in America; however, experts have postulated the feminization of the field occurred in the 19th century. According to some accounts, women began to outnumber men in the profession by 1860. Black female teachers gained no status in the profession until the latter part of the century, as African-American males dominated the field until they were able to pursue careers in fields such as medicine, journalism, law and government, theater, and religion. The teaching field became evermore feminized within both racial groups over the course of the twentieth century. Sarah E. Montgomery, "Why Men Left: Reconsidering the Feminization of Teaching in the Nineteenth Century," *American Educational History Journal* 36, no. 1, 2009: 219; Motoko Rich, "Why Don't More Men Go into Teaching?," *New York Times*, (Late Edition East, Coast), September 7, 2015, SR 3; Bettye Collier-Thomas, "The Impact of Black Women in Education: An Historical Overview," *The Journal of Negro Education* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 175.

¹¹³ See Mayer, "The Full and Sometimes Very Surprising Story," SM18 for information about the key roles mothers played in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experimental district; Adeyemi Bandele, interview; Bright interview in Angela Weusi, et al., interview by Dwight Brewster, October 11, 2014; Les Campbell, interview by Blackside, Inc., November 3, 1988, transcript, Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads*, 1965-1985 Interviewees, St. Louis, MO.

¹¹⁴ Peterson in Angela Weusi et al., interview by Dwight Brewster, October 11, 2014; Both Martha Bright and Kwasi Konadu reported that *Uhuru Sasa* teachers' stipend was \$200 a month [or about \$10,937 in 2016]. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 76; Bright in Angela Weusi et al., interview by Dwight Brewster, October 11, 2014; Rickford noted that six full-time faculty at Brooklyn's *Uhuru Sasa* made \$8500 each in 1975, which was equivalent to \$36,000 in 2013 [or \$38,737 in 2016]. Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 243.

mothers in the experimental district also became employees and volunteers at *Uhuru Sasa*.

Women like Aminisha Black revealed several reasons for joining The East's workforce. Black, who became the organization's bookkeeper after enrolling her sons in *Uhuru Sasa* following the Ocean Hill-Brownsville confrontation, also co-founded the organization's nursery school, Imani Daycare, with Lady Byrd. The childcare center began in Black's home as a cooperative effort of the women, who took shifts to care for the children while others worked either in East operations or in their careers outside the organization. The center was a result of working black mothers' collective needs.¹¹⁵ As such, Imani Daycare demonstrated one of the important ways Pan-African cultural-nationalist women leveraged gender roles, which emphasized mothering, by using daycare operations to achieve more time and space for women's work beyond birth, childrearing, and housekeeping.

As we have seen, Tamisha Peterson donated books for the East's Akiba Mkuu store, but she also gave her time and energy to *Uhuru Sasa* as a teacher. Her first experience at *Uhuru Sasa* occurred when Jitu Weusi asked her to substitute teach a class for a fellow educator who was in upstate New York helping clear a section of Queen Mother Moore's land for summer camp. She took over for her coworker during the summer of 1971 and generally taught girls' classes thereafter.¹¹⁶

Uhuru Sasa's approach to teaching embodied a similar Pan-African cultural-nationalist ethos as others within the constellation of independent black institutions. Teachers were

¹¹⁵ Adeyemi Bandele, interview; Martha Bright also noted the work New York City School teachers performed at *Uhuru Sasa*. Bright, interview, part 2 of 2, June 24, 2013; Angela Weusi et al., interview by Dwight Brewster, October 11, 2014; Lady Byrd is listed as Imani Day Care staff in The along with Tamisha, Khadija, Muslimah, Naima, Aminisha, Afua, Taifa, Nayo, Waridi, Mtamanika, Oseye, Wambui, Nassoma, Darra Iman, Ieola, Olabisi, and Ramona; For a description of the child development center's offerings, see "Imani," *Black News*, 2 no. 11 (December 11, 1973): 19; For more information on the Imani Center, see Konadu, *A View from the East*, 91-96.

¹¹⁶ Weusi et al., interview by Dwight Brewster, October 11, 2014.

community “mamas,” performing *kazi* to transmit the values necessary to aid nationality formation. *Uhuru Sasa*’s teachers also lived in the areas where they worked and were part of central Brooklyn’s fabric. As Bright put it, “We were the teachers and the mamas in the school.” The women’s narratives indicated that faculty members often worked seven days a week. “We had sisters who went on field trips and took the children to camp,” said Bright. For example, “We went one fall up to Queen Mother Moore’s estate in upstate New York and spent a weekend there.” Bright also indicated that *Uhuru Sasa* faculty spent their summers educating children in the community. Teachers participated in Central Brooklyn Model Cities, taking hundreds of youth to participate in summer programs at HBCUs like Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, explained Bright.¹¹⁷

The Ocean Hill-Brownsville experience exposed the reality that the residents in the poor and working-class black and brown communities had been marginalized within the city school system, rendering them “nameless and faceless.” To help ameliorate the situation, advocates of community control appealed to educators to “make an extra effort” and reach out to students and their families in the neighborhood.¹¹⁸ While the UFT asserted that such requests went beyond the

¹¹⁷ Bright’s quotes are from Bright, interview 1 of 2, June 24, 2013 and Weusi, et al., interview by Dwight Brewster, October 11, 2014; The papers of Harvey Scribner, first chancellor of the newly-decentralized public school system, contain the 1970-1973 Model Cities files. Central Brooklyn housed a Model Cities experiment. These antipoverty projects existed from 1966-1974 and were initiated by the Lyndon Johnson presidential administration. The program was initially designed to encourage members of economically-disadvantaged groups to become more involved in municipal politics. Central Brooklyn’s Model Cities education-related plans focused on dropout prevention and featured winter and summer academies. *Uhuru Sasa*’s specific role in the program requires further research, particularly in the area of women’s participation and leadership. Finding Aid for Board of Education, Series 1101 Chancellor Harvey Scribner files, 1970-1973 Subseries IV: Model Cities Program, New York City Department of Records, accessed June 21, 2015, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/html/archives/scribner4.pdf>; Bret A. Weber and Amanda Wallace, “Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program,” *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 1 (2012): 173; Konadu estimated that 300 junior high school students from Brooklyn spent the summer of 1972 at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina although the origin of the number is unclear. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 74; Bright indicated that her trip to Shaw was in 1971. Bright, interview, part 2 of 2, June 24, 2013; The *Uhuru Sasa* Freedom Now summer day camps were advertised in *Black News*. For examples, see *Black News*, 2 no. 4 (June 2, 1973): 31 and *Black News*, 3 no. 1 (May 31, 1975): n.p.

¹¹⁸ Rhody McCoy, interview by Louis Massiah, October 12, 1988, transcript, Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, *Eyes on the Prize II*, Interviewees, St. Louis, Missouri.

contractual duties of public school teachers, Peterson's narrative revealed that activist approaches to education were common among *Uhuru Sasa's* independent school instructors, who took up such work to fill the void left after the community control movement collapsed. She stated, "The teachers had to make sure that they went to the parents' house, so by the time that the first month [of the school year] was over, we had visited each parent's house [and] knew what their household situation was." Recalling the level of community acceptance they received as reflected in the ways parents welcomed the visiting teachers, she said, "Although we told them we weren't coming there to eat, each family really pretty-much wanted to make us comfortable and they were so happy that we came to them because that was rare. They never had any public school teachers to come visit them at their house."¹¹⁹

Like the African Free School, *Uhuru Sasa* educated a broad range of students in terms of talents and abilities in an effort to counterbalance the public school system's shortcomings. For example, *Uhuru Sasa* accepted students with behavior issues and those who had dropped out of the public system. "Many of our students came from the public school system with discipline and other related problems," wrote Walker. He stated in an interview that administrators accepted students with various challenges at *Uhuru Sasa*, where they learned in an environment emphasizing identity, pride, and order. Many students enjoyed learning at *Uhuru Sasa*, said Walker. He also asserted that they eventually demonstrated greater academic proficiency than those in the New York City public school system. Further, he wrote in his autobiography, "After being at *Uhuru Sasa*, they became disciplined, self-assured, and at least two years ahead of the

¹¹⁹ Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014; Bright, interview, June 24, 2013, part 2 of 2.

public school system students academically.” Moreover, he stated, “I’ve talked to many students that attended Uhuru Sasa in their adulthood and they all tell they benefitted from the school.”¹²⁰

Tamisha Peterson reiterated Uhuru Sasa teachers served many different black students from New York City’s five boroughs, including those with special needs such as learning, emotional, and behavioral issues. “We had a lot of children that came from what they used to call 600 schools.¹²¹ They were kicked out of a 600 school because they were bad. Their next road was up the river, [juvenile] detention unless their parents could find someplace else,” recalled Peterson. She then suggested that families came to Uhuru Sasa because they were seeking a last-resort educational option. Peterson added that most such students were challenging to teach but that many improved under the care and guidance of Uhuru Sasa educators. “There were a few that had become handfuls or *were* handfuls when they came,” she said. On the bright side, “Most of them turned around, though. . . . For the most part, they kind of calmed down.” Invoking the language of a “community mama” invested in cultivating children of all backgrounds and abilities as members of a formative black nation, Peterson said, “I think that we always did show love and respect for the children and you get that back.”¹²²

¹²⁰ Walker, interview; Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 16; Bright also asserted that Uhuru Sasa served students who had left the public school system. She emphasized the important role that the professionally-trained educators who worked with Uhuru Sasa played in assisting students with earning their high-school diplomas. Bright, interview, part 1 of 2, June 24, 2013; For an example of a document reflecting the importance of discipline and order at Uhuru Sasa, see the “Uhuru Sasa Shule Protocol” as transcribed in Konadu, *A View from the East*, 161-162.

¹²¹ The “600” Schools were New York City public day schools and long-term confinement facilities, which were possibly named for the fact educators received an additional \$600 as a form of hazard pay. The schools were intended to educate and rehabilitate special needs students who were withdrawn from mainstream schools due to behavior problems. New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, NY, 1965, “600” Schools, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, n.p., accessed March 4, 2016, ERIC, EBSCOhost; “Guard Against Dumping-Ground Schools,” *New York Times* (Late Edition, East Coast), September 4, 1992, A20; For an anecdote of an instance where a child services investigator insisted on placing a young girl from an abusive home with East advocates, see Arnie Goldwag, Brooklyn CORE, on Jitu Weusi, n.d., Sheila Michaels Oral History Collection, Columbia University Library, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.corenyc.org/omeka/items/show/298>; Peterson, interview.

¹²² Peterson, interview.

Teachers at Uhuru Sasa also had other commonalities with those working in the independent and supplementary black-nationalist institutions. For instance, Uhuru Sasa faculty led single-sex classes, emphasizing what was deemed appropriate behavior for developing manliness and femininity, as did School of Afroamerican Culture teachers. “We had brothers’ classes and with men teachers and *dada*’s classes with women teachers,” stated Bright.¹²³ Additionally, work in other East enterprises, *Black News* sales, and hosting the annual African Street Festival were essential fundraising activities for educators. Fundraising was necessary task for teachers, as Uhuru Sasa operated on a tuition-driven budget, which was supplemented by donations. Fees were set low enough for members of the community.¹²⁴

Like faculty and staff in the Us Organization, CFUN/CAP, and Ahidiana schools, Uhuru Sasa’s educators found a dearth of culturally-relevant classroom literature. Also, like Us and CFUN/CAP educators, their ingenuity in creating course texts and activities meant that they contributed to enlarging the possibilities of Pan-African cultural-nationalist literature for black youth. In her narrative, Peterson described the kind of *kazi* Uhuru Sasa’s dedicated and creative teachers performed. “We did everything. . . . We painted our rooms the way we wanted to. I love the fact that we had freedom to create our own curriculum. We drew books with black faces.” Peterson further explained, “We didn’t have any books, because we weren’t going to use the same crappy books they had in the public school, which showed no black faces at all, had no urban settings at all. So yeah, we were creating a lot of our own stuff, our own curriculum, [and] our own books.”¹²⁵

¹²³ Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 17; Bright, interview, part 2 of 2.

¹²⁴ Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 17; OBJK interview 1; Peterson, interview.

¹²⁵ Peterson, interview.

Like others, Peterson asserted that the school was the most important East institution in the community.¹²⁶ Her opinion was partly rooted in the idea that Uhuru Sasa's teachers imparted an education focused on preparing students for freedom and self-determination according to a black-nationalist perspective, and was partially based on the fact that one of Uhuru Sasa School's main goals was educating the whole family. Peterson posed the rhetorical question, "What's more important than the education of your children?" She followed up with a statement suggesting that providing children with a proper, Pan-African nationalist education was the organization's "biggest thing. There were a lot of other things going on at The East, but the one big thing was Uhuru Sasa," said Peterson.¹²⁷ The school's holistic education process did not only consist of primary, elementary, and secondary education programs for children, but also included the adult-focused Evening School of Knowledge, which offered a slate of classes covering subjects like visual arts, math, English language arts and communications, economics, political ideology, food and nutrition, sewing, self-defense, and Swahili. Moreover, Uhuru Sasa School contributed to and influenced other East programs, such as the bookstore, food coop, *Black News*, and the *Tamu* Sweet-East restaurant. Likewise, these East community programs influenced the school. Thus, the work of Uhuru Sasa's mostly-female faculty was integral to The East organization's process of nationality formation and nation building.

Additionally, in a manner similar to parents at the African Free School, guardians of Uhuru Sasa students were encouraged to be active in their children's educational process. East advocates' overall philosophy was that, "Educating children while the adults remain in the dark is not going to make for a successful unit." The only requirement for African Americans desiring

¹²⁶ Peterson, interview.

¹²⁷ Peterson, interview.

to affiliate with Uhuru Sasa was commitment to “the black cause,” service in the East, and \$10 weekly tuition that could be waived through “‘working’ scholarships.”¹²⁸ Thus, the school attracted East affiliates through its instructional programs. Shukuru Sanders recalled walking in her neighborhood on Bedford Avenue and seeing a poster for a new school. After hearing Jitu Weusi explain the institution’s purpose and mission, she enrolled her son in the fall of 1970. She began volunteering in the kitchen as part of the school’s parental involvement requirement. Her initial job, which entailed helping serve warm food and tea during the students’ breakfast meals, eventually grew to include the lunch shift, then increasingly greater involvement as an advocate in The East Organization.¹²⁹ The fact that Uhuru Sasa School often functioned as a gateway for community members to spotlight educators’ and administrators’ importance as political agents in the process of nationality formation.

Uhuru Sasa faced many of the same challenges as other IBIs. The changing sociopolitical and economic climate of the mid-1970s and early 1980s brought external factors such as repression, economic recession, decreasing philanthropic donations, a drug epidemic, and crime to the doorsteps of IBIs. Moreover, the Pan-African nationalist movement faced internal turmoil from ideological conflict over the appropriate path to freedom (racial nationalism or Marxism) and flagging incomes to activist burnout and attrition. Jitu Weusi stepped down as headmaster of Uhuru Sasa in 1978. He was succeeded by a number of others whose leadership was short-lived. Uhuru Sasa struggled with various issues, including difficulty maintaining the school’s physical spaces and utility bills. Although the institution continued to allow parents to work off debts

¹²⁸ Lesly Jones, “Uhuru Sasa Shule Says Family Must Re-Educate,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 15, 1972, B1; Uhuru Sasa Evening School fall session advertisement, *Black News*, October 22, 1973, 27; Surfaro, “The East.”

¹²⁹ Sanders in Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014.

through campus service and offered scholarships to approximately a fifth of its students, administrators were forced to raise yearly tuition from \$450 to \$500, a hefty price for working-class families. Unable to survive the increasing financial strain, the school had closed its doors by 1986.¹³⁰ According to Akili Walker, Uhuru Sasa's "closing was a tremendous loss to New York because it was totally focused on teaching children and helping adults to develop their talents to become all they could be."¹³¹

8.4 "Our People's Future is Dependent on Our Children's Vital Education": Ahidiana (New Orleans)¹³²

The seed of New Orleans' black independent schools germinated in the earliest months of the 1970s within a group of the city's progressive black activists. An experience with an independent school in New York inspired Kalamu ya Salaam's brother, Kenneth Ferdinand, to develop a similar venture in the crescent city, the family's hometown. Ferdinand met Cicely St. Julien (later Tayari kwa Salaam) after returning south. St. Julien had a "deep love" for and "interest" in developing schools and curricula for black youth as part of the larger national movement to create independent black institutions, which included CAP, the Us Organization (Los Angeles) and Safisha Madhubuti [Carol Lee] and the Institute of Positive Education (Chicago). St. Julien worked alongside Ferdinand to reach parents and activists also wanting to build a school. The first institution growing out of this partnership was Dokpwe Work/Study.¹³³

¹³⁰ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 244-245 & 247. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 111.

¹³¹ Walker, *Turn the Horns On*, 17.

¹³² Ahidiana Work/Study Center: A Black Independent, brochure.

¹³³ Kwesi Nantambu, interview; Joshua-Jasmine, interview; Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-Journeying," 2-3, 13; Camara, "There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans," 183; Wakesa Madzimoyo, "Afrikan-Americans Educate Their Own," *Southern Exposure* VIII, no. 3 (Fall 1980): 43; The estimate of sixteen members is from

In 1972, Ahidiana evolved from a split among Dokpwe's members over the direction and purpose of their work. Those desiring to continue developing Dokpwe solely as a school remained with Kenneth and Williettatta Ferdinand, who was his wife at the time. Others, including Tayari and another Ferdinand brother, Keith, desired to expand their activities to encompass a new "full-fledged Pan-African revolutionary organization." The more diversified institution would focus on schooling as only one of its undertakings. Advocates of the holistic approach believed they should not only help liberate the minds of African-descended children in New Orleans, but also develop their organization as a "lifestyle" guided by the *Nguzo Saba*, and aimed at nurturing future activists to assist in liberating the oppressed peoples of the world.¹³⁴

In the aftermath of the split with Dokpwe, advocates developed Ahidiana as a *Kawaida*-influenced cadre organization, an association comprised of organizers, which attracted between 16 and 22 adult members. Ahidiana's advocates launched their own Work/Study Center. Operations and programming like the Work/Study center were open to the masses and grew out of Ahidiana's mission to serve the working-class people of the Lower Ninth Ward. The educational institution was an independent black school founded in November 1973 to educate

Kalamu ya Salaam, interview; Tayari kwa Salaam defined Dokpwe as an "independent Black institution"; however, I chose the language "black independent school" based on Andrews' language, which differentiates education in early learning centers, elementary, middle, and high schools developed as alternatives to mainstream state and private schooling from extra-schooling or supplementary programs such as Saturday and evening courses, and summer camps, which were meant to overcome the inequalities and gaps in mainstream state or private programs. Andrews, "Toward a Black Radical Independent Education," 11-12.

¹³⁴ Kiini Ibura Salaam, interview; The word "lifestyle" is Nilima Mwendo's; Camara, "There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans," 183-184; In Tayari kwa Salaam, "Practice the Values and Love Revolution," 40 the author stated "The Nguzo Saba, Seven Principles, are the values we live and believe in Ahidiana." She specifically pointed out that the Black Value System to which Ahidiana adhered was originated by Karenga and further developed by Amiri Baraka.; Ahidiana members worked on transforming their entire community and themselves as individuals. Their Sunday meetings involved exercise, study, planning and implementation of projects and programs, school maintenance, and food preparation. Collective food buying and communal childcare was done on Saturdays. Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-Journeying," 98; Williettatta Ferdinand was mentioned in Joshua-Jasmine, interview.

children between the ages of three and eight years old.¹³⁵ As one of two Ahidiana members responsible for the school's daily functioning, and the Work/Study Center's educational theorist, Tayari Salaam explained several aspects of the school's philosophy and purpose. The Center was black in its constituents' primary commitment to the defense, development, and self-determination of African-descended people. Tayari wrote that the Work/Study was independent because its administrator-teachers strove for the greatest possible level of economic self-sufficiency. The Work/Study Center sustained its program with tuition, Ahidiana membership dues, and supporters' donations. Ahidiana's dedication to existing as a small, committed group of influential activists was expressed via the Center and can be seen in the following statements: "Our deepest hope is that we will inspire others to start independent black schools." Tayari also explained that Work/Study staff wrote a teachers' manual and had planned on producing a film to influence the development of other black independent and supplementary educational institutions.¹³⁶

Women in Ahidiana managed the daily operations of the Work/Study Center and, by consciously shaping it as an affirming and supportive space for black children in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward, they were key participants in the struggle to build a "new society, within and

¹³⁵ Camara, "'There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans,'" 183-184; The term "organization of organizers" was quoted in Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 10; Cadre is defined as "a closely knit & disciplined group of persons who share similar views, values, and commitment to make change" in St. Julien, *Upon the Shoulders of Elephants*, 61; The estimate of 16-17 members is from Kalamu ya Salaam, interview; The number of 22 members is from St. Julien, *Upon the Shoulders of Elephants*, n.p. and the plan to develop Ahidiana as a cadre organization with mass-based programming is taken from St. Julien, 12; Ahidiana Work/Study Center: A Black Independent, brochure has information on the founding of the Work/Study Center.

¹³⁶ Ahidiana's literature stated that the organization was focused on African-descended individuals, although visitors of all races were welcome and the rights of other peoples were neither excluded nor denied. Tayari Salaam, "Ahidiana," *Southern Exposure* VIII, no. 3 (Fall 1980), 45; Ahidiana Work/Study Center: A Black Independent, brochure; Amina Baraka also expressed that funding sources were a marker of institutional independence. For an assessment of issues linked to maintaining independence, avoiding state funding, and resisting what was viewed as co-optation by outside forces see Andrews, "Toward a Black Radical Independent Education," 11-12.

beyond the classroom, at home and abroad.”¹³⁷ The Center started with five students and was located in a remodeled house at 2303 Deslonde Street in the neighborhood.¹³⁸ Pictures of notable African-Americans adorned the walls and stood as reminders of how important it was to uplift the students and teach them self-determination. The placement of the images represented a centering of black history and culture in the curriculum as well as in the physical learning space.¹³⁹

As in certain other *Kawaida*-influenced cultural-nationalist organizations, teachers were not only referred to by the Swahili word *Mwalimu*, but youth also affectionately called teachers and other older advocates “mamas and babas” as a practice of reinforcing community values and *ujamaa* (familyhood).¹⁴⁰ Kiini Salaam pointed out in her narrative that Ahidiana was more than its core cadre organization and related school. The organization was composed of various blood, marital, and friendly relationships constituting an extended family where children like her “socialized” and “lived.” Practices such as calling community members “mama” and “baba” connected Ahidiana advocates to one another as well as to other groups with similar beliefs. Although some would criticize members as “elitist” and insular, Kiini remembered feeling that

¹³⁷ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 19.

¹³⁸ Tayari Salaam, “Ahidiana”; “The Work Study Center” (paper prepared for the 1985 Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, November 16, 1985), 1, Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection; Kalamu ya Salaam, interview; Tayari Salaam referred to the Work/Study Center “prepared environment” was “purposeful.” Tayari kwa Salaam, “Practice the Values and Love Revolution,” 43; Warren-Williams, interview; During its second year, the school had ten students. In 1980 the school served 24 children. Tayari Salaam, “Ahidiana,” 45; Camara, ““There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters in New Orleans,”” 201.

¹³⁹ Tayari kwa Salaam, “So-journeying,” 107-108.

¹⁴⁰ Tayari kwa Salaam, “Practice the Values and Love Revolution,” 42; Also see “Family Schools Newsletter,” *Black News*, 15-17 for examples of female teachers referenced Mwalimu; Former students and childhood community members referred to their elders as “mama” and “baba” in their self-narratives for this study. Joshua-Jasmine, interview; Kiini Ibura Salaam, interview.

together, they could “create a world where people are supporting each other.”¹⁴¹ As far as Work/Study students and young members of the broader Ahidiana/Dokpwe community were concerned, their community “mamas” were at the Center of the process of dreaming and making a better nation and world.¹⁴²

Past students and community members remembered the administrator-teachers as vital and influential. Kwesi Nantambu fondly recalled the Center was the first educational institution he attended. “In most of the roles at Ahidiana,” he said, women “were very significant because a lot of them were facilitators at the school.”¹⁴³ Kina Joshua-Jasmine observed the Work/Study Center as a member of the broader Ahidiana/Dokpwe family. The ladies who ran Ahidiana’s school “were powerful women. . . . They knew their stuff,” she stated.¹⁴⁴

Kwesi and Kina went on to recount the details of the women’s work and shared observations about elements contributing to their effectiveness as educators in a black independent institution and as nation builders. Kwesi suggested that the women contributed to Ahidiana’s goals of providing a holistic education by teaching more than basic subject matter. Work/Study teachers carried out these aims by “instilling values of respect for the community, respect for your fellow person, also just educating you about . . . your ancestors, your history, how we were brought up, how we were brought here, and more.” Kwesi further commented on

¹⁴¹ Kiini Ibura Salaam, interview.

¹⁴² The term “‘dreaming’ . . . a world” is a reference to the Langston Hughes poem, *I Dream a World*, which is the author’s reverie about a more loving and peaceful world; Ahidiana members connected to others with similar views in various ways. They “were always hosting different nationalists who were coming in or freedom fighters from the international community who were coming through New Orleans,” according to Kiini Ibura Salaam, interview.

¹⁴³ Kwesi Nantambu, interview.

¹⁴⁴ Joshua-Jasmine, interview; Kalamu ya Salaam indicated that men were required to help support the school; however, according to his explanations, men mainly made financial contributions as well as cleaned and maintained the physical plant. Kalamu ya Salaam, interview.

Ahidiana teachers' pragmatic approach, saying they provided insight on interpreting and navigating the social problems students faced. Kina highlighted Tayari Salaam in her recollections, offering, "I thought she was a hugely powerful person in the community. She always spoke up. She was always trying to organize something."¹⁴⁵ According to Rickford, the act of nurturing children who were "literate and conscious of the world as it was and as it might be" remained one of independent black institutions' key thrusts. The women who taught at the Work/Study Center carried out the important goal of raising the consciousness of a new generation of leaders, sustaining this important institutional outgrowth of Black Power a decade after the movement had begun to wane.¹⁴⁶

Academic instruction in the areas of math, science, communications, and physical education was part of the Work/Study Center curriculum; however, students also received direction in "culture," which reflected *Kawaida* principles including the *Nguzo Saba*.¹⁴⁷ Culture was defined as "the study of the material and social conditions and practices of our people and the World."¹⁴⁸ As cultural nationalists, advocates believed it was "the most effective means for teaching our people to take an active role in shaping our lives by creating and determining our future . . . The value of culture lies in how one understands self in relationship to everything else."¹⁴⁹ Kina Joshua-Jasmine explained that the women taught students about identity, critical

¹⁴⁵ Kwesi Nantambu, interview; Joshua-Jasmine, interview; An example of Tayari Salaam's organizing efforts can be seen in her service as a de facto fundraiser for programs. "KWANZAA News," brochure 1985, Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection.

¹⁴⁶ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 16.

¹⁴⁷ Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-journeying," 104; For an example of how each of the *Nguzo Saba* was taught at the Work/Study Center, see Tayari kwa Salaam, "Practice the Values and Love Revolution," 40-46.

¹⁴⁸ "The Work Study Center," 2.

¹⁴⁹ Tayari kwa Salaam, "So-journeying," 2 & 103.

thinking, and independence in a nurturing and engaging environment. She said they encouraged, “learning about who you were” and “where you came from.” Kina expressed that their teaching style “was never belittling. . . . You were always questioned in a way that made you think about why you did [something] rather than just being talked to.” She commented on their skills, “The women . . . were well organized and it seemed to me that they really knew their craft and how to motivate kids to want to learn and become more self-sufficient.”¹⁵⁰

Much like East advocates, Ahidiana members opted to redefine spaces and create institutions within their working-class, majority-black, urban community rather than waiting on the integrationist promise of equality to reach their neighborhood or out-migrating to more affluent areas.¹⁵¹ One of Kiini Salaam’s strongest memories centered on how the Work/Study Center’s unique visual and sonic presence transformed a part of the Lower Ninth Ward. “From a visual perspective, just being there doing things differently,” she said. “We had different clothes and then every day we would do our exercise, so we were running around the block. We had our uniforms and then we had a unity circle. We’d start every day with a circle.” Kiini recalled the unique sounds of the Center in addition to its distinct look. “We’d sing songs and chant and that was done . . . outside,” she said.¹⁵²

Kiini recalled that nearby residents were attracted to the unique Work/Study Center environment and some eventually enrolled their children. “Certain families in the community saw that and they kind of were interested and they’d send their children to the school at a very affordable rate . . . and through that they would learn about different health choices and just

¹⁵⁰ Joshua-Jasmine, interview.

¹⁵¹ Majority-black city centers, which liberationists treated as “liberated zones” were referred to as “key sites for reimagining community” in Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 12.

¹⁵² Kiini Ibura Salaam, interview.

different cultural possibilities that they may not have been aware of.”¹⁵³ Vera Warren-Williams was one of the neighborhood residents to whom the Work/Study Center appealed. Warren-Williams had been educated in New Orleans public schools where she felt marginalized, not least because of her radical outlook and natural hairstyle. She believed in Ahidiana’s approach to implementing an independent black educational institution in the Lower Ninth. They holistically taught black children “on the level of discipline, cultural and global awareness, proper diet, [and] exercise.” Ahidiana’s faculty nurtured mature students who did well academically once they left the Work/Study Center to attend public schools modeled on Eurocentric, middle-class cultural values. Warren-Williams believed the school was “radical and revolutionary” for undertaking such a task.¹⁵⁴

In a sense, the students’ ideas did not pose any challenge to the ideology of complementary gender norms, as young people have historically perceived women as powerful in their capacities as mothers and teachers. Teaching, particularly as an extension of mothering, was feminized work both within *Kawaida* and in broader, mainstream society. Black-nationalist schools, however, were a critically important piece of the political work of identity formation and nation building, and teachers occupied an elevated status within cultural-nationalist ideologies and organizations. An aphorism printed on a Work/Study Center brochure plainly expressed the interconnected nature of nation building and teaching, “To build our nation, build our people. To build our people, teach our children!”¹⁵⁵ Moreover, Mtumishi St. Julien pointed

¹⁵³ Kiini Ibura Salaam, interview.

¹⁵⁴ Warren-Williams, interview; the language for comparing independent black institutions and mainstream schools is from *We Are an African People*, 2; Kwesi Nantambu also praised Ahidiana’s focus on academic excellence. Kwesi Nantambu, interview.

¹⁵⁵ “Work/Study Center Ninth Annual Graduation Celebration,” brochure.

out that Ahidiana's work, including that of the Work/Study Center, was "done in the spirit of changing the minds and hearts of our people to make a positive change in the lives of African people here and abroad."¹⁵⁶

Rickford has cited the importance of Pan-African nationalist educational institutions in reconstructing African-American identity in the post-Jim Crow era. Women were central to what he described as a "vibrant Black Power submovement." Moreover, Tayari kwa Salaam quoted *Mwalimu* Shujaa, who wrote that strategic, differentiated education and schooling played significant roles in bolstering "African-American resistance to political and cultural domination," and shaping the development of the black "cultural nation."¹⁵⁷ Independent black institutions' roles as "vital mechanisms of 'black consciousness,' which inculcated a sense of pride and awareness, a bulwark against the self-abnegation of 'Negro' mentality" meant that the women who filled the ranks of the schools' educator corps occupied an important position within the Black Power Movement.¹⁵⁸

Like the other schools highlighted in this dissertation, the Work/Study Center functioned as an incubator where new groups of nationalists could be developed. Teachers at the Work/Center instilled nationalist values, undertaking the tasks of either reinforcing ideals taught in students' homes or introducing the paradigm to children from the broader Ninth Ward community.¹⁵⁹ Notably, the instructors reinforced *Kawaida* values such as the Seven Principles

¹⁵⁶ St. Julien, *Upon the Shoulders of Elephants*, 61.

¹⁵⁷ Tayari kwa Salaam quoting Shujaa's Education and Schooling in "So-Journeying," 111.

¹⁵⁸ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 144 & 2.

¹⁵⁹ Ahidiana Work/Study Center's teaching techniques were aimed at "bring[ing] the school to the home and the home to the school." "The Work Study Center: Teaching Technique" (paper prepared for the 1985 Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, November 16, 1985), Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection; Kina B. Joshua-Jasmine, interview.

of Blackness, but theirs was a syncretic version of the doctrine, which openly advocated women's equality.¹⁶⁰ As Rickford pointed out, Ahidiana developed a "stronger ethic of self-criticism" than other Pan-African cultural nationalist formations. In other words, the version of *Kawaida* values taught at the Work/Study Center was more egalitarian than others in terms of gender-role socialization.

Beyond teaching the Seven Principles, teachers at the Work/Study Center instructed students with a curriculum based in other *Kawaida*-inspired values. For instance, children were also taught the importance of *kazi*, which was underscored in a myriad of ways at the Work/Study Center. *Kazi* was reflected in the term "work" in the school's name. It was embedded in the teaching method, *Darasa/Kazi*. *Darasa/Kazi* meant "class/work" and differentiated two instructional approaches. *Darasa* referred to formal, structured class time. *Kazi* was the name given to the children's independent study time. Seemingly in opposition to stereotypes casting African Americans as lazy, Work/Study teachers regularly reinforced the idea that "Afrikan people have a lot to do. We are always doing Kazi."¹⁶¹

The Work/Study teaching philosophies and methods also revealed how Ahidiana members conceived of leadership. Leadership was closely tied to the concepts of *kazi* and *ujima* (collective work and responsibility). Service was expressed as a key part of collective work and responsibility and leadership. Quoting Sekou Toure, Tayari kwa Salaam wrote, "You either serve the people or you use the people. There is no in between." Moreover, she explained that pupils were taught "the value and responsibility of leading and following." As with other Ahidiana

¹⁶⁰ "The Work Study Center," paper; "Ahidiana Work/Study Center: A Black Independent and Affirmative Institution of Vital Education," brochure; Syncretism refers to the combining of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought.

¹⁶¹ Tayari kwa Salaam, "Practice the Values and Love Revolution," 43.

projects, all participants, male and female, were given the opportunity to lead on a rotating basis. Teachers explained to the students, “We believe in collective leadership and one person cannot always lead.”¹⁶² Tayari kwa Salaam’s explanations provided a view of the ways *kazi* leadership was conceived and operationalized in an informal network of *Kawaida*-influenced groups, rather than by the philosophy’s best-known, most powerful, male leaders.

Beyond imparting *Kawaida*-influenced doctrine, part of the school’s mission was to affirm black lives and shape students into revolutionaries. School administrators and teachers focused on African Americans’ identity, purpose, and direction in terms of the struggle for power and liberation. They also asserted “the worth and dignity of Black life and the Black liberation struggle.”¹⁶³ As indicated about The East family in Chapter 5, the Ahidiana organization claimed a space in the midst of one of the roughest neighborhoods in the U.S. for the process of affirming that “black lives matter,” in the process of nurturing their students at the Work/Study Center.¹⁶⁴

Work/Study Center administrators and teachers also engaged pedagogy for the purpose of shaping students into revolutionary leaders. According to Vera Warren-Williams, “That was revolutionary thinking . . . that you would choose to educate your own children in a house that was converted to a school, that taught more on the level of discipline, cultural and global awareness, proper diet, exercise and it didn’t follow the norm.”¹⁶⁵ “We are not trying to raise ‘cute’ simply Black and beautiful children or ‘smart’ (high IQs) children who will feed into and become a part of the American system,” the Work/Study Center’s mission statement said. “We

¹⁶² Tayari kwa Salaam, “Practice the Values and Love Revolution,” 44-45.

¹⁶³ “Ahidiana Work/Study Center: A Black Independent and Affirmative Institution of Vital Education,” brochure.

¹⁶⁴ Kifano, *Promises and Possibilities*, 44.

¹⁶⁵ Warren-Williams, interview.

are trying to raise soldiers and warriors, future leaders in our people's struggle for power and national liberation. Power to our people must start with education for our children . . . Tomorrow will belong to us, only if we educate our children today. Power to our people, education to our children."¹⁶⁶ Women were at the heart of this process as Work/Study Center teachers and administrators.

Rickford points out that since patriarchy plagued the egalitarian mission of independent and supplementary black institutions, it would be a mistake to overstate how much agency women wielded in the struggle to overturn male dominance. Rickford wrote that women founded and operated schools in which they played critical roles, the masculinist framing of liberation and leadership meant that, for the most part, the institutions reproduced the male supremacy embedded in the majority culture. It is, thus, important to explore the ways women and girls navigated such realities in local organizations.

Although masculine privilege inside or outside the organization has never been fully obliterated, the imprint of women's agency can be seen on Work/Study Center literature. Though *Kawaida*-influenced, it reflects Ahidiana's movement beyond the practice of encouraging marginal roles for women. As Ahidiana evolved, both men and women were uplifted in school literature, poems, and songs.

Early Work/Study Center literature presented ideas that promoted males as formal leaders and females as their complements. In the 1974 children's "Ujamaa" story, which was part of a collection titled *Who Will Speak for Us?*, Tayari kwa Salaam wrote that two

¹⁶⁶ "Young Soldiers and Warriors/Raising Emotionally Committed Black Leaders," revised paper n.d., Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection; In some pieces of literature and internal papers the statement reads, "raise soldiers and warriors, future revolutionaries, leaders, and workers." Kalamu ya Salaam with Tayari kwa Salaam and Kuishi kwa Taraji, *Herufi: An Alphabet Reader* (New Orleans: Ahidiana, 1978); Notes written on a paper draft reflected that someone grappled with the language. "Young Soldiers and Warriors Raising Emotionally Committed Black Leaders," paper draft n.d., Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection.

friends, a dog and cat, were sharing the responsibility of transporting food from a co-op. Brother Dog said to Sister Cat in the story, “Brothers have a responsibility to lead; so, I’ll take the first turn. And sisters are completers; you can take the second turn.”¹⁶⁷ Although female characters of other stories in the collection were praised for having such traits as organizational skills and intelligence and were portrayed as witty straight-talking experts, the book culminated with the election of a male character as the representative who would speak for the others.¹⁶⁸

On the other hand, a chant that was an updated form of the *Kawaida* saying, “*Sifa Ote Mtu Weusi* (All Praises to the Black Man),” entreated students at the Work/Study Center to recite the following in English and Swahili:

All praises due to the Creator.

All praises due to the Afrikan man.

All praises due to the Afrikan woman.

All praises due to Afrikan children.

All praises due to Afrikan life.¹⁶⁹

The more egalitarian language represented an evolution or “modernization” of the Pan-African cultural-nationalist literacy archive.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ The story also referenced a quote from “Imamu Baraka,” which indicated group’s CAP influence. Tayari kwa Salaam and Salaam, *Who Will Speak for Us?*, n.p.

¹⁶⁸ Salaam and Salaam, *Who Will Speak for Us?*, n.p.

¹⁶⁹ “*Sifa Ote Mtu Weusi* (All Praises to the Black Man)” was a saying taught to children at African Free School and can be heard in the jazz song “Baraka.” Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 142; Mtume, “Baraka,” *Kawaida*, recorded December 11, 1969 O’Be Records OB-301, 33 1/3 rpm; The Work/Study Center chant is in “Young Soldiers and Warriors Raising Emotionally Committed Black Leaders,” paper.

¹⁷⁰ The assertion that CAP affiliates “modernized” cultural nationalism can be found in Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 114.

The Work/Study Center faced external issues and internal weaknesses rendering it unsustainable, like the other IBIs that were the focus of this study. Establishing and sustaining independent schools was a fiscally-demanding endeavor. Specifically, Ahidiana's modest tuition was insufficient to cover operating expenses, yet fees still remained out of reach for the masses of Ninth Ward residents. Few revenue streams existed for the school beyond tuition. Although they accepted supporters' donations, advocates eschewed government funding and regulation as a method of avoiding external control. Even if they had sought the resources, municipal or state funds might have been difficult to procure, as federal support for local governments fell by sixty percent between 1980 and 1988. Moreover, African-Americans from all walks of life experienced dramatically-declining incomes during the Reagan years, a reality which meant the women who may have continued to sustain the Work/Study Center sought employment outside Ahidiana's enterprises to help their families make ends meet.¹⁷¹

Activist burnout, changing values, and what was termed "social attrition" also contributed to the demise of the Work/Study Center, Ahidiana, and the advocates' broader New Orleans community of cultural nationalists. Ahidiana's children were left to cope with the culture shock of attending public schools as they progressed beyond the Work/Study Center's course offerings. Moreover, the level of *kazi* demanded from the women running the school took its own toll. It became increasingly harder for advocates to commit to sustaining the Work/Study Center after their own children were gone.¹⁷² To make matters worse, Tayari, the school's chief

¹⁷¹ Kifano, "Promise and Possibilities," 49; Tayari kwa Salaam, "Sojourneying," 98; Warren-Williams, interview; "Ahidiana Work/Study Center: A Black Independent and Affirmative Institution of Vital Education," brochure; Camara, "There are Some Bad Brothers and Sisters," 203; Peter Dreier, National Housing Institute, "Reagan's Legacy: Homelessness in America," *Shelterforce Online* 35 (May/June 2004), <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/135/reagan.html>; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Falling Behind: A Report on How Blacks Have Fared Under Reagan," *Journal of Black Studies* 17, no. 2 (December 1986): 149.

¹⁷² Kiini Ibura Salaam, interview.

administrator/teacher, was struck with a brain tumor. Emphasizing the feeling of weariness, she declared in her narrative, “We was tired. Okay? We was tired,” about teachers’ tenure at the school. Besides exhaustion, attrition was caused by a general sense of malaise among activists. As the radical 1960s and early 1970s succumbed to conservative backlash, some advocates left the organization, deeming it too radical and antiestablishment for the changing times. Others exited the working-class community to which Ahidiana belonged, seeking to ensconce themselves in middle-class professions and more affluent neighborhoods. Still others left as they exchanged the idealism of the early years for jaded critiques of certain group practices, as they increasingly seemed too essentialized, “dogmatic,” and “socially isolating.”¹⁷³

Many of Ahidiana’s core families dissolved in this context. Divorce was a recurring theme in narratives about Ahidiana, particularly as splintered families left some female advocates unable to maintain the level of vigorous *kazi* the struggle demanded. The erosion of Ahidiana’s *ujamaa*-based practices and the dissolution of two-parent households meant community “mamas” were left alone emotionally and economically to function as single mothers focused on making a living for themselves and their children during the era of Reaganomics. As a result, several women including Tayari, went into what one former student called “survival mode.” Managing daily existence in such difficult circumstances forced the women, who had once been standard bearers of *Kawaida*-influenced Pan-African cultural-nationalism, to move away from their staunch advocacy of nationalist values, particularly as related to diet and

¹⁷³ Tayari kwa Salaam, “Sojourneying,” 115-116; Camara, “There Are Some Bad,” 203-204; Quotes are from Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 5 and generally referred to Pan-Africanist IBIs; Nantambu questioned Ahidiana advocates’ lack of verve, stating that members were not very spiritual. Moreover, she believed, long-time friends in the organization, who had become like family members, declined invitations to her farewell celebration because they eschewed parties as decadent. Nantambu left the organization in 1980 to live and work in Nigeria. Nana Anoa Nantambu, interview.

education. In 1986, the Work/Study Center closed amidst the dissolution of the other organizations forming the bedrock of New Orleans-based cultural nationalism.¹⁷⁴

This chapter explored reflections on females' gender roles and education in the IBIs of Us, Committee for a Unified Newark and the Congress of African People, The East, and Ahidiana. Within such Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations which initially drew upon a philosophy limiting females' gender roles to home, education, and supporting males' agendas; schools were important outlets for women's political work. Advocates conceptualized African Womanhood as a characteristically African-diasporic identity, but the black-nationalist expression of gender roles also resembled the mainstream American early national period concept of Republican Motherhood. Like Republican Mothers, members of the majority-female teaching corps associated with *Kawaida*-influenced IBIs were central to the process of developing good citizens in the budding nation and leveraged their access to the education, training, and leadership opportunities to move beyond prescribed gender roles. Moreover, Pan-African cultural-nationalist women employed values like *kazi* and *ujamaa* in their positions as educators to create and extend programs such as communal child care, which helped advocates, both female and male, perform important political work beyond their domestic duties.

¹⁷⁴ Tayari kwa Salaam, "Sojourneying," 4; Kalamu ya Salaam, "Wounded," *Neo-Griot: Kalamu ya Salaam's Information Blog*, April 24, 2013, <http://kalamu.com/neogriot/2013/04/24/essay-wounded/>; Nana Anoa Nantambu, interview; Joshua-Jasmine, interview; Ahidiana advocates particularly used the word "struggle" to mean the Freedom Movement in general, more isolated instances of activism, vigorous resistance to domination, armed resistance, as well as it meant hard work. According to Kalamu ya Salaam, "We had our contradictions. We had our problems and so forth and so on, and we accomplished a great deal. It was struggle. Let's not romanticize. People start talking about the good old days and all that bullshit. We had some heavy, heavy struggle that we had to go through." Kalamu ya Salaam, interview by author.

9 CONCLUSION: “KAZI LIKE YOU MEAN IT”: KAZI LEADERSHIP LESSONS IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT¹

My curiosity for this dissertation topic began with attempts to make sense of the incredible personal transformation happening in my late teens and early twenties. Like writer Ta-Nehisi Coates, I was one of the many young people whose awareness about the conditions of my existence blossomed in the midst of early 1990s Afrocentricity. “In this blooming consciousness, in this period of intense questioning, I was not alone,” Coates wrote in *Between the World and Me*.² I intimately knew how the author’s coming-of-age experience was not isolated when I read that passage. My age-mates and I, born in the 1970s, were with Coates and his cohort in spirit, opening our supple minds to kernels of knowledge planted during preceding decades.

For me, the 1990s involved newfound Kwanzaa celebrations and conferences keynoted by battle-weary but determined Black Power Movement veterans when I was a Spelman College student. My evenings and weekends were filled with politicized poetry slams, “conscious” rap-music performances, and meetings packed with folks trying to change the world in bursts of youthful exuberance. I also spent a lot of time at the African-American book and media stores that functioned as hubs for all such activities. Coates vividly described the times: he mused that “seeds planted in the 1960s forgotten by so many, sprung up from the ground and bore fruit” during the era, as rappers featured the words and images of black nationalist leaders in their lyrics, beat breaks, and videos. Coates described how he played taped black-power media purchased at African American bookstores, much like I did.³

¹ The term “Kazi like you mean it,” was a subheading in Black and Angaza, *The EAST Sisterhood*, 7.

² Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2015), 34-35.

³ Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 34.

Coates' book explicated aspects of black masculinity to his son. He focused on the contours of African American manhood like so many authors who have penned reflections on black nationalism, black power, and black consciousness. My specific conception of black femininity, however, shaped my experiences and can be identified with "African womanhood" in many aspects. I joined a group in the 1990s, going through a process called "The Journey to African Womanhood." Little did I know at the time, that "African womanhood" was a black-nationalist designation with a decades-long history. Not limited to merely being men's helpmates, my female peers and I were groomed for leadership, and we committed ourselves to fighting racism, classism, *and* sexism.⁴ In terms of defining African womanhood, we thought we were "inventing the wheel" at the time. I had no knowledge of the CFUN *Mumininas'* early primer on nationalist womanhood, which was written more than two decades earlier. The booklet was filled with instructive lessons we could have used on our journey.

Once I officially declared a history major, I began to dig into black-nationalist literature and mine primary sources. The documents revealed that the active and outspoken women who had indirectly influenced my activism and writing had not received the same level of attention as the men, and that cultural-nationalist women were particularly marginalized. Their shrouded existence in the literature was a reality despite all the work they performed in service of the black freedom struggle. I chose to write about female cultural-nationalist activists who were so instrumental in shaping "African womanhood" because I believe the ideology is worth examining in historical context, particularly for my daughters and other young people who are

⁴ Heterosexism became a contested issue, as outspoken lesbian and bisexual sisterhood members challenged the group's ideological boundaries. Heteronormativity was never addressed in organizational creeds.

protesting, organizing, and generally getting “woke” within the current political climate.⁵ They should not have to reinvent the wheel. This conclusion outlines core aspects of *kazi* leadership, elements of movement decline, positive memories and accomplishments of cultural-nationalist advocates and institutions, the limitations of this study and a contemplation of research topics needing greater attention in an effort to reflect on past movements to shed light on present and future resistance efforts.

9.1 Key Aspects of Kazi Leadership

Who was a *kazi* leader? Many became activists for similar reasons as their predecessors and contemporary activists involved in other movements within the Black Freedom Struggle. The tumultuous circumstances of their era shaped and catalyzed these particular baby boomers’ advocacies for black-power cultural nationalism. Their environment also fostered a cosmopolitan outlook, which they often channeled into Pan-Africanism. Pan-African cultural nationalist women were products of the Black Campus Movement, taking its core tenets and implementing them by helping establish institutions such as bookstores, presses, and programs across the country in neighborhoods beset by urban crisis.

What did *kazi* leaders do? In Kawiada-influenced cultural-nationalist organizations as in other nationalist expressions, women’s “work” often emphasized birthing and nurturing extended families as the cornerstone of nation-building efforts. They also organized and directed other, less-feminized activities like media operations, voter registration drives, political campaigns, fundraising, boycotts, and pickets. Even while engaging in activities that were typically

⁵ “Woke” is a vernacular term used by young African Americans that means being aware of social justice and community issues.

associated with femininity, they were key to the process of actualizing cultural-nationalist concepts like *taifa saa* (nation time) and *ujamaa* (cooperative economics) through enterprise development focused on clothing sales and production, health and nutrition, food preparation and activism, cooperative businesses, as well as conferences and study groups aimed at consciousness raising. The women's peers often informally acknowledged their leadership roles. The peer designation as a leader, however, did not always correlate with official leadership positions.⁶ Independent and supplementary black educational programs were some of the most significant cultural-nationalist community ventures. *Kawaida*-influenced African Womanhood was initially based on an ideology that circumscribed females' roles while also elevating them as parents and teachers. Movement schools, nevertheless, became important venues for women's political theorizing and activism. Much like the Republican Mothers of the American Early National Period, determined Pan-African community "mamas" would employ nationalist ideals to lead organizations, develop programs, and extend their education and training.

At times cultural-nationalist women advanced Black Power masculinism, and worked within traditional roles. They also sidestepped, openly critiqued, and vigorously resisted patriarchal practices. Their theorizing helped produce more modern and progressive gender ideas and policies within cultural-nationalist organizations. In this way, a central part of the women's roles in cultural-nationalism evolved from a singular focus on complementarity to include what I call *kazi* leadership.

⁶ Like other managers and directors, *kazi* leaders could be appointed or elected. Many, however, were emergent leaders, which is defined as group members who exert influence, having emerged due to peer recognition. Others might have been thrust into leadership positions due to their mate's status. Because this dissertation focuses on memory, it is important to note that some women were remembered by peers as leaders, although they did not hold specific formal leadership roles or their leadership was circumscribed, much like Robnett's bridge leaders. Yan Li et al., "A Multi-Level Study of Emergent Group Leadership: Effects of Emotional Stability and Group Conflict," *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* 29, no. 2 (June 2012): 352; Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.

What were the basic characteristics of *kazi* leadership? I suggest that there were three core components:

1. A primary motivation to perform the difficult, sustained work of nation building among African and African-descended people, rather than to merely being “in charge.”⁷
2. A commitment to collectivity and cooperation or the belief that there must be multiple program administrators, institution developers, and group leaders within the freedom struggle. Those occupying such positions must be from various walks of life, especially in terms of gender and age.⁸
3. A focus on developing consciousness derived from meaningful and critical knowledge of the cultures, heritage, and struggles of African and African-descended peoples.⁹

Labeling the women’s work as *kazi* leadership is not meant to suggest a qualified kind of leadership, but to articulate a specific type that developed among women in Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations of the Black Power era. I developed this leadership definition in the process of studying women. *Kazi* leadership, however, is not gendered.

⁷ Konadu reported that Jitu Weusi discussed this commitment for hard work and several other aspects of what I term *kazi* leadership in his assessment of East organizational legacies. Suggesting *kazi*, Weusi claimed that “hard work and respect for good work” were important because they produced results. Konadu, *A View from the East*, 134-135; Somewhat like Robert Greenleaf’s servant leaders, females in Kawaida-influenced organizations focused on collectivity and were often deemed leaders, as they were sanctioned via the service they performed. Their specific calling to nation build in service of the struggle for black liberation and their particular use of cultural and critical consciousness make *kazi* leaders unique as servant leaders. For more information on servant leadership, see Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977); Adam Focht and Michael Ponton, “Identifying Primary Characteristics of Servant Leadership: Delphi Study,” *International Journal of Leadership Studies* 9 iss. 1 (2015): 44-61.

⁸ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 136. Amina Baraka emphasized that the difficult work of forging freedom and equality necessitated that everyone should be able to participate and lead according to the level and quality of their work. The chance for equality should not have been limited based on personal identity. Baraka, however, associated such inclusive organizing with socialist ideology. Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; Collectivity and cooperation also emphasized *ujamaa*, which stressed familyhood as well as a type of social entrepreneurship focused on cooperative economics.

⁹ For an example, see Ahidiana members’ use of the concept *darasa/kazi* for teaching students. *Darasa* meant “class” or “lesson.” Together *darasa/kazi* or study and work exemplified a philosophical approach to activism. That is, study should inform praxis and praxis should, in turn, inform ideology. “The Work Study Center” (paper prepared for the 1985 Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, November 16, 1985), 1, Tayari kwa Salaam papers, private collection.

Instead, I have tried to call attention to the possibility of a different, more collective, grassroots kind of leadership emerging from Pan-African cultural-nationalist formations. Maulana Karenga and Amiri Baraka, both prominent leaders of Pan-African nationalist organizations, faced accusations of allowing a cult of personality to flourish within the groups that they led.¹⁰ Moreover, much of the literature about *Kwaidia*-influenced organizations focuses on the best-known leaders. The idea that “a single leader, group, or ideology may possess the formula for black freedom” is a fallacy according to Rickford. A close assessment of female members in *Kwaidia*-influenced organizations reveals the necessity of understanding collective leadership. East leader Jitu Weusi emphasized the importance of “collective leadership” to the Black Freedom Struggle; he defined the term as meaningful and critical consciousness of the cultures, heritage, and struggles of African and African-descended peoples, and respect for hard work. Weusi particularly wrote that collective leadership was important because no individual can develop and sustain an institution alone. Notably, he stated that sincere leaders must be willing to lead and follow. Invoking *kazi*, Weusi also noted that “hard work and respect for good work” produce results. I assert that Weusi’s reflections encompassed the basic characteristics of what I am terming *kazi* leadership.¹¹

¹⁰ In Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; Brown, *Fighting for US*, 65-67, 127, & 156; Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 73; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 123, cult-of-personality leadership was described as circumstances in which organizational literature, practices, rituals, and the like fostered uncritical and, at times, worshipful praise and admiration for Karenga and Baraka.

¹¹ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 124; Konadu, *A View from The East*, 134.

9.2 *Elements of Decline*

When I began my research, I tried not to add to Black Power declension narratives.¹² Examining shortcomings and ebbs in the development of philosophies, organizations, and movements, however, is integral to any serious study. As one movement veteran pointed out, one of the most painful legacies of the period is the continuing suspicion, broken relationships, enmity, and competing narratives between activists who were once comrades.¹³ Remnants of conflict are evident in some of the cultural-nationalist women's testimonies collected for this study. Academics such as Komozi Woodard, Scot Brown, Kwasi Konadu, Michael Simanga, and Russell Rickford have also documented this type of discord. Some assert that advocates abandoned their initial radicalism, others observe that 1960s nationalists fell short of their ultimate goal of attaining self-governing, economically self-sufficient, territorially-based nationhood; that activists' emphasis on unity masked serious differences, and their focus on personal change and self-help was ineffective in bringing about structural change.¹⁴ Others point out that many met what Konadu called the "challenge of continuity" through their ideological definitions of nationhood as an enduring sense of community among African-descended people. Advocates produced knowledge, built institutions, and sustained programs as manifestations of Pan-Africanist cultural-nationalist ideology.¹⁵ One could argue that the shortcomings of these

¹² See the Methodology Appendix for a deeper discussion of how my personal beliefs influenced my approach to writing about this topic.

¹³ Watani Stiner, "A COINTELPRO Survivor Speaks Out!", Segun Shabaka, email correspondence, September 8, 2016.

¹⁴ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, 2016 Edition (Oakland: University of California Press, 2013), 142-143.

¹⁵ Konadu, *A View from The East*, 126-127.

black nationalists do not constitute a story of degeneration but one of evolution in the midst of changing times.

It is true, however, that Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations were in the midst of institutional decline and faced pressure from multiple sources by the mid-1970s. Conflict was one particular factor that debilitated the advocates and their organizations. Inter-group conflict plagued the Black Freedom Struggle of the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly due to the forces of state repression; however, other external pressures also crippled the liberation struggle. COINTELPRO and Karenga's incarceration specifically caused a fragmentation and transformation of the Us Organization.

In terms of the Congress of African People, the leaders' turn from cultural nationalism to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism led to the organization's weakening and ultimate absorption by the League of Revolutionary Struggle, a group mainly consisting of Asian-American and Latino Marxist-Leninists. Additionally, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the general climate of American political conservatism grew, even as the black middle class expanded and greater numbers of African-American public officials won public office. Both The East organization and Ahidiana struggled and declined amidst changing times and limited funds.¹⁶

The Us Organization and the Black Panther Party became embroiled in an ideological conflict over who should lead the black revolt. The dispute resulted in a number of Panthers and their advocates' denouncement of "cultural nationalism" as diametrically opposed to "revolutionary nationalism." In this context, cultural nationalists were disparaged. Meanwhile, state programs such as the FBI's COINTELPRO program exploited the conflict between the Us Organization and the BPP. Under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI surveilled,

¹⁶ Ahidiana's demise is addressed in Chapter Seven of this dissertation.

incapacitated, and destroyed several organizations in an effort to hamper the liberation movement. Among other tactics, agents used propaganda to provoke and worsen conflicts such as those occurring between and within cultural and revolutionary-nationalist organizations. As a result, the conflict reached a fever pitch at a January 17, 1969 shoot-out between Us and Black Panther Party members on the UCLA campus. Two Panthers, John Huggins and Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter, were killed.¹⁷

After the UCLA shooting, advocates report witnessing Karenga’s deterioration as a leader. He became fatigued, paranoid, substance addicted, and his authoritarianism intensified. Karenga’s diminished leadership capacity coupled with state disruption efforts were elements creating a context for a violently oppressive group of Us Organization leaders, and which transformed the organization’s core. The period beginning with the UCLA shooting in 1969 became known as “the Crisis,” and individual members’ lives drastically changed as subgroups within the Us Organization began to function mainly as security personnel protecting Karenga against the Panthers and the state. A pervasive sense of “paranoia” and a “siege mentality” began to envelope the organization.¹⁸

Convicted in June 1971 on charges of assault and false imprisonment, Karenga was sentenced to a 1-10 year prison term for torturing two female Us Organization advocates, Deborah Jones and Gail Davis. He believed Davis was attempting to poison him. Karenga and

¹⁷ M. Ron Karenga, “A Response to Muhammad Ahmad,” *The Black Scholar* 9, no. 10 (July/August 1978): 55-57; Stiner, “A COINTELPRO Survivor Speaks Out!”; Brown, *Fighting for US*, 117-119; Scot Ngozi Brown, “The US Organization, Maulana Karenga, and Conflict with the Black Panther Party: A Critique of Sectarian Influences on Historical Discourse,” *Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 2 (November 1997): 158; For an example of the FBI’s plans for causing disruption between the Us Organization and the Black Panther Party, see Memorandum, FBI Director to Los Angeles Special Agent in Charge, June 3, 1968, Federal Bureau of Investigation, COINTELPRO, Black Extremists and Investigation of the Deacons for Defense and Justice, Part 1.

¹⁸ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 112, 120, & 122-125; Imani Omatayo (pseud.), interview.

some advocates, moreover, viewed the leader's conviction as a part of a larger conspiracy to discredit him as a leader of the black revolt.¹⁹ Other activists maintained that the incident was a reflection of Karenga's longstanding personal shortcomings and overall inadequacies as a leader.²⁰ Women who were former Us Organization members and who shared their narratives for this dissertation remembered "the Crisis" as a turning point, which eroded their faith and drove them away from the organization. Amina Thomas particularly viewed the abuse of the two female advocates and absence of public atonement as a more general betrayal of black women. Some *Kawaida* advocates continue to assert that Karenga's lack of remorse and open apology nullify his ability to effectively represent the Black Freedom Struggle, and they say this is one reason they left the organization.²¹ Others like Karenga's second wife, Tiamoyo Karenga (formerly Luz Maria Tamayo), continued serving as *Kawaida* standard bearers, eventually articulating views on *Kawaida* and women's gender roles.²² Members such as Subira Kifano would also fill post-1975 Us ranks for several decades.

The Us Organization's "Crisis" period was marked by varying impulses. On one hand, it was the era giving rise to the *Matamba* women's unit, who trained in armed self-defense and martial arts to serve the organization in security capacities. According to Scot Brown, females' service in such security functions stimulated the Us Organization's ideological shift away from

¹⁹ Scot Brown, *Fighting for US*, 126; "Prison Notes," *The Black Scholar* 6, no. 5 (January-February 1975): 31; Imamu Clyde Halisi, "Maulana Ron Karenga: Black Leader in Captivity," *The Black Scholar* 3, no. 9 (May 1972): 27.

²⁰ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 129; Wesley Kabaila, "On Dr. Maulana Karenga: An Open Letter by Wesley Kabaila," *Assata Shakur Blogspot*, July 9, 2010, <http://assata-shakur.blogspot.com/2010/07/on-dr-maulana-karenga-open-letter-by.html>.

²¹ Brown, *Fighting for Us*, 120; Amina Thomas, interview.

²² Tiamoyo Karenga and Chimbuko Tembo, "Kawaida Womanism: African Ways of Being Woman in the World," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 1 (2012): 33-47.

male supremacy toward greater recognition of gender equality in the early 1970s. Yet, increasing militarization coupled with the group's tarnished public perception after the UCLA shooting may have influenced some would-be supporters to view organization members as threatening. In particular, many critics held that the Us Organization had victimized the Panthers. Although Us continued to perform some of its community activities, popular support waned as its members grew increasingly villainized, and the organization lost its core membership and larger support networks. During what Scot Brown defined as Karenga's "post-1975 reentry into Black nationalist activism," the organization was reconstituted in the forms of the Afro-American Movement, *Kawaida* Groundwork Committee, and the Organization Us. Though active and dedicated, Us has not, however, regained the level of popularity and influence it enjoyed in the 1960s. Only a few active members from 1960s returned to Us in the late 1970s.²³

The dissolution of the Us Organization's leadership, and the group's decline as a significant actor within the Black Power Movement coincided with the rise of the Congress of African People's prominence in the movement, with Amiri Baraka and CFUN at its helm. Formed in 1970, CAP reached its zenith at the point of the 1972 National Black Political Convention. Woodard characterized CAP as "the most formidable black nationalist organization in the country" because of its nationwide branch membership as well as its influence on other important groups and individuals within the Black Freedom Struggle.²⁴ Despite CAP's growing authority, the organization's most productive years were not without conflict. For example, Baraka's security forces clashed with a group of Us *Simbas*. The incident was particularly

²³ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 123-124 & 129; For a snapshot of opinions about the Us Organization in 1969, see Jim Cleaver, "Karenga, Black Panthers Speak Out," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 6, 1969, A1, D2, & D6.

²⁴ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 219.

notable because part of CFUN's security unit consisted of former Us advocates who had moved away from California. The California advocates also left Committee for a Unified Newark after several months, disagreeing with the leadership over multiple issues, including their disdain for CFUN's implementation of *Kawaida* principles. Amina Baraka's strong condemnation of polygyny is reported to have particularly offended several in the California contingent, who had maintained such households while in New Jersey. Despite points of disagreement with former Us members, CAP affiliates played significant roles in advocating for Karenga's prison release. Additionally, some former affiliates in Brooklyn, Chicago, and New Orleans helped revitalize and maintain cultural-nationalist ideologies and *Kawaida*-influenced practices and institutions into the 1980s.²⁵

CAP's leadership struggled to enlarge its reach amidst shifting political sands at the height of its influence in 1972. Woodard asserted that CAP and CFUN leaders' belief in the organization's own power and the rightness of its approach was challenged. CFUN spearheaded construction projects aimed at assisting Newark's African American communities as the growing populations expanded beyond the established boundaries of the ghettoized Central and South Wards, but activists faced resistance ranging from legal wrangling and bureaucratic red tape to mob threats and violent attacks from angry white vigilantes. Additionally, after taking office, Mayor Kenneth Gibson seemed to withdraw support for the very Black Convention Movement activists who had helped him gain election.²⁶

²⁵ Brown, *Fighting for US*, 126-129; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 219; Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82-83; "Political Prisoners", *Black New Ark*, November 1972, 4; "Maulana Karenga Benefit: Parole Denied for Another Year!", *Black New Ark*, Septemba [sic] 1972, 1 & 2.

²⁶ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 219 & 222-223.

Because of what Woodard termed a “profound crisis in faith,” the Barakas increasingly considered theories of socialism as leading-edge ideologies for the organization, and they turned to Marxism as a culmination of that process. This philosophical turn signaled the decline of CAP-led cultural nationalism. Funding for *Kawaida* Towers, *Kawaida* Community Development, the Project Area Committee (PAC), and the African Free School was withdrawn, and those programs were dismantled. The Newark Housing Authority ordered the demolition of the buildings housing the PAC office, CAP’s theater, the television studio training program, the National Black Assembly, African Liberation Support Committee headquarters, and the African Free School classrooms. The New Jersey Housing Finance Agency buried the \$1.5 million foundation of *Kawaida* Towers. Baraka was further radicalized by these local developments as his national political authority within the Black Freedom Struggle weakened.²⁷

Ideological divisions surfaced beginning in 1974 within the Modern Black Convention Movement and intensified by 1976. As black allegiance shifted from independent politics to the Democratic Party, CAP changed its ideological foundation from nationalism to national communism. Additionally, CAP had become embroiled in a struggle over the preferred approach to Pan Africanism (class-based organizing with the Left or race-focused cultural nationalism) among African Liberation Day committee activists, a split from which the organization would never recover. By 1976 the African Liberation Support Committee and the Black Women’s United Front were in disarray due to internal conflict. The Barakas would ultimately disavow cultural nationalism. Woodard regards this as the end of the Newark Black Power experiment.²⁸

²⁷ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 224 & 253-254.

²⁸ Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 254; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 225-226.

East organizational leaders, preoccupied with institutional survival, were also beset by changing circumstances on local and national levels. While community and institutional development marked The East's formative years from 1969-1977, Konadu characterized 1977-1986 as a period of decline and ultimate organizational demise. As with other *Kawaida*-influenced cadres, which were inherently inwardly-focused, small group formations, The East family grew isolated from the larger community in which it existed. Transient membership, and a more eclectic organizing style than other *Kawaida*-influenced groups, left the institution with an unclear guiding vision, and opened The East to members with a weak sense of commitment or purpose. This porousness may have even led to infiltration by agents provocateurs. Unresolved challenges in interpersonal relationships, unstable leadership of the educational institutions that advocates viewed as The East's centerpiece, and poor business management of the overall organization also contributed to The East's dissolution. The decline of Ahidiana's Work/Study Center, also a central institutional component, spelled the end of the New Orleans organization.²⁹

In 1976, the East turned the Sumner Avenue armory in the *Uhuru* Cultural Center, where all of the operations were moved after a period of decentralization. The only exception was The East Catering, which remained at 10 Claver Place until a fire destroyed the building housing the enterprise. The *Uhuru* Cultural Center went through a period of expansion during which administrators rented it to other community groups including a gun club that came under government surveillance. Concert organizers also used the venue and an event-goer was tragically murdered during one of their shows. These events tarnished The East's image among officials and community members, leading to increased scrutiny from city authorities, seizure of

²⁹ Konadu, *A View from The East*, xxxiii & 62-65; Rickford critiques the cadre approach in *We Are an African People*, 133; Ahidiana's demise is outlined in the conclusion of Chapter 7.

the armory in 1986 for use as a homeless shelter, and ultimately to the organization's demise in the same year. The International African Arts Festival, which still takes place each June, is the only remaining East enterprise.³⁰

As gleaned from oral history narratives, second-generation advocates reported a sense of sadness and frustration that independent black institutions were so limited in terms of sustainability and footprint. Kwasi Konadu called the phenomenon "the challenge of continuity." Konadu stated that black nationalism had been "dormant" or "fragmented" during certain historical periods. He framed the issue of sustainability as a test of courage and determination, stating "to advance a sense of self and community in an environment that is hostile to such advancement is a testimony to the African spirit and its humanity." Konadu framed the lasting efforts of Pan-African cultural nationalists via its IBI as a challenge to the "power relations within the existing social order," a kind of resistance to cultural hegemony.³¹ Rickford also weighed in on the issue, writing that that Pan-African nationalists' efforts served both the practical, material needs of movement advocates as well as utopian hopes and dreams that self-help initiatives and institution building would rearrange the power relations of an oppressive state.³²

The narratives collected for this dissertation reflected these themes, as second-generation Pan-Africanist nationalists particularly reported feeling a sense of shock over transitioning from the nurturing environment of their communities to the broader mainstream society, a fact which

³⁰ Konadu, *A View from the East*, 66; Charles Baillou, "Block Groups Want Armory for Community," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 20, 1986, 11; For more information on the International African Arts Festival, see <http://iaafestival.org/>.

³¹ Konadu, *A View from The East*, 126.

³² Rickford, *We Are and African People*, 15.

may speak to the shortcomings of the cadre method as Rickford has pointed out, but also one that highlights the roots of black-nationalist schools' mission to serve as bulwarks against white dominance.³³ Young, second-generation advocates viewed this shielding approach as both protective and coddling. Kwesi Ayo Nantambu, who was an Ahidiana Work/Study student explained, "I had the inner-city life of New Orleans . . . and I had the cultural side. There were some [classmates] who only saw the Ahidiana side . . . and . . . middle-class living up until they [went] to college and . . . it gave a false reality [of what] the world was like." Kwesi further explained that he left the Work/Study Center at the age of ten and he too had experienced "the reality of coming back to New Orleans in the [1980s]."³⁴

Kwesi Nantambu suggested that Ahidiana advocates may have been naïve in their optimism about changing the world, and contended that some of his male classmates battled mental issues when they had to make their way in mainstream schools after Ahidiana Work/Study center closed. "Ahidiana was painting that we're going to have this pro-black world and progressive world," he explained. "When [my classmates] got out and saw that [African Americans were] going through some of the same mental slavery and issues on the whole and that we [Pan-African nationalists] were truly the progressive mindset. Our mindset was more the minority than the majority. . . . Some people couldn't handle that and still have had issues handling it."³⁵

³³ Rickford, *We Are and African People*, 74 & 133.

³⁴ Kwesi Ayo Nantambu, interview.

³⁵ Kwesi Ayo Nantambu, interview; Kina B. Joshua-Joseph also observed this occurrence. She offered the opinion that emotional challenges possibly related to the shock of having come of age in a nationalist environment impacted more of the second-generation males in their community than the females. Joshua-Joseph, interview; In Brown, *Fighting for US*, 121-122 and Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 247, authors discussed how fatigue and paranoia caused mental distress and breakdowns in adult activists but Kwesi Nantambu and Joshua-Joseph pointed out a similar issue among the offspring of Pan-African nationalists.

Mothers echoed the sense of disappointment about movement institutions' limitations in terms of shielding children from harsh realities such as racism, internalized self-hatred, economic inequality, drug addiction, misogyny, homophobia, and dysfunctional families. There was no panacea in black nationalism or in socialism, for that matter. Amina Baraka lamented, "I'm so sad . . . because I can't protect my children. No individual can protect their children. I can't protect them. I [have] a daughter. My oldest daughter is 51 and she's a dope addict. She's out on the street. . . . We can't help her." Amina Baraka expounding on the violence that affected her children's lives said, "I have had a son shot in the head with a .357 Magnum. We pulled him through. He's alive."³⁶

The story of the Barakas' younger daughter, Shani, particularly reflected the need for any effective tendency within the Black Freedom Struggle to address the multiple forms of oppression all African Americans face. The husband of Shani's older sister, Wanda, stalked the elder sibling and killed the younger in an act of domestic violence.³⁷ "I have a daughter who was murdered," Amina Baraka lamented. My [older daughter, Wanda's] husband killed her, shot her in the fucking head and she was gay and he killed her partner too. He killed her. He killed both of them."³⁸ At Shani's memorial service, older brother Ras Baraka posed the following incisive questions, "Why couldn't we save her in all of our Blackness, prayers, our revolution talk, our [healing] conferences? Why couldn't we keep her alive? How can we shape a community and let our little sister die?"³⁹

³⁶ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

³⁷ Wanda Wilson-Pasha had filed at least twelve domestic violence complaints against her estranged husband. "Man Surrenders in Deaths of Poet's Daughter and Her Friend," *New York Times* (Late Edition, East Coast) August 18, 2003, B10; *State of New Jersey v. Ibn El-Amin Pasha*, No. A-1590-05T4 (N.J. Super. 2008), LexisNexis 1564.

³⁸ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

³⁹ Jamie Walker, "Home-Going Celebration for Daughter of Amina and Amiri Baraka Touches Many," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 21-27, 2003, 5 & 30.

The Barakas' story emphasizes the need for a radically-inclusive movement, yet researchers and advocates alike have offered the critique that *Kawaida*-influenced cultural nationalism was overly focused on racial and cultural unity, and that it glossed over internal differences, falling short on issues of gender and sexuality.⁴⁰ Tayari kwa Salaam discussed the ways the idea of “we” in Ahidiana masked differences within their community of activists. “With no idea of multiple subjectivities, I looked only at my ethnic, cultural, and racial subjectivity. . . . I was also blind to who I was as an African American woman,” she stated about her early years in the organization.⁴¹

While many women navigated and resisted male dominance in *Kawaida*-influenced organizations, some would ultimately repudiate cultural nationalism altogether. Amina Baraka denounced cultural nationalism when she became a Marxist. Explaining why she decided to distance herself from Pan-African cultural nationalism, she said, “There was a whole group of people who [were] willing to talk about Africa, willing to braid hair, willing to run for office . . . but they [were] not willing to fight for the working class. I left.” Describing interactions that catalyzed her migration toward M-L-M, she said, “When I came upon those students [at] Howard University and Central State, all those young students that followed Carmichael and who followed the SNCC people, [in] SOBU [and] YOBUS . . . they [were] talking the kind of talk I wanted to hear!” She explained further that some of the college graduates involved in Left Pan-African nationalism had come from working-class families and challenged cultural nationalists’ ideologies and tactics.⁴² Theorists like Michael Simanga have documented Amina Baraka’s

⁴⁰ Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 298.

⁴¹ Tayari, *So-Journeying*, 115-116.

⁴² Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; SOBU was an acronym for Student Organization for Black Unity or Students Organized for Black Unity. SOBU was founded in 1969, and became Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBUS) approximately one year later.; For more information on SOBU/YOBUS, see Biondi, *The Black Revolution*

ideological transition and influence on her husband.⁴³ “I had to fight my husband then. I said, ‘No, I’m with them, I’m with them,’ and of course, I made mistakes. I made a lot of mistakes. . . . We fought like dogs. I was so afraid that I was going to lose my children and my marriage but I took the chance because I’d rather be free or dead than tell a lie.”⁴⁴

The activism of committed individuals like Amina Baraka changed Black Power Era Pan-African nationalist groups in terms of gender mandates, but beliefs and practices related to women’s equality varied. The literature reflects a continuum. Some responses can be categorized as *Kawaida*-womanist assertions of complementarity that pose a moderate challenge to masculinist privilege. Other forms of resistance were overt feminist assertions of complete gender equality, which condemned ideas and practices supporting gender difference male dominance.

Themes of decline and shortcoming also surfaced in the oral history narratives.⁴⁵ For instance, emphasis on a narrow self-conception of blackness, African culture, and identity, were also problematic, and has been well documented in the literature.⁴⁶ Amina Baraka forwarded the critique that some advocates expressed black pride in superficial ways and clung to it at the expense of what she deemed more effective ideologies that analyzed multiple forms of

on *Campus*, 234; Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 108 & 111; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 166; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 127 & 181.

⁴³ Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82.

⁴⁴ Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

⁴⁵ Some of the women reported feelings of being watched and subverted, exhaustion, and a general loss of interest in activism, particularly due to extraordinary expectations related to *kazi* as well the sense that the state was surveilling and disrupting their activities Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012; Rickford, *We Are an African People* 247; Konadu, *A View from the East*, 127.

⁴⁶ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 124; Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography*, 253 & 276; Tayari kwa Salaam, *So-Journeying*, 144-115.

oppression.⁴⁷ Additionally Tayari kwa Salaam discussed a class during which she asked Work/Study Center students to indicate where they lived on a world map. She wrote that her students responded by pointing to the continent of Africa.⁴⁸ In essence, the women reflected on the idea that the constructed, idealized traditional “Africa” of cultural-nationalist ideology was problematic. They critiqued cultural-nationalist practices of propagating utopian images of Africa rather than undertaking meaningful engagement with contemporary African Americans and Africans with their varied and dynamic cultures, social classes, and perceptions of gender.

9.3 Achievements

Although themes of decline were evident in the women’s narratives, many of their recollections reflected positive memories of time spent in *Kawaida*-influenced formations. Female advocates described the groups as places where families formed and grew but they also remembered the organizations as spaces that fostered their activism, leadership, and long-lasting collegial relationships. Martha Bright pointed out that The East was mainly comprised of teens and young adults, many of whom came of age, found partners, and became parents during their time in the organization.⁴⁹ Aminisha Black fondly recalled that handsome, young men flocked to The East.⁵⁰ Positive memories of budding romantic and familial relationships were reflected in the stories of women in other cultural-nationalist organizations as well, which is not surprising given the importance of families within black-nationalist ideology. For instance, Jaribu Hill said

⁴⁷ Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

⁴⁸ Tayari kwa Salaam, *So-Journeying*, 115.

⁴⁹ Martha Bright in Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 12, 2014.

⁵⁰ “The East . . . Remembering a Wellspring,” *Our Times Press*, November 11, 2003, accessed July 26, 2016, <http://www.ourtimepress.com/?p=2155>.

she found her “life partner” in the movement. She also stated, “We brought one daughter into the world while still in CFUN and the Congress of African People.”⁵¹ As families formed and grew, Pan-African nationalist women exhibited *kazi* leadership by developing methods for parents to remain politically active through such practices as communal day care.⁵²

Female East advocates addressed the importance of an “irreplaceable Sisterhood” forging an awareness of themselves, shaping a larger feeling of community, and sustaining their activism.⁵³ Shukuru Sanders expressed that a sense of family keeps her feeling close to the now-disbanded East. Abimbola Wali emphasized in her narrative that she developed “forty-five year plus” friendships with East women. According to Bright’s accounts, The East Sisterhood continued to plan national and international reunions and cultural trips as well as local functions. They also wrote and distributed an annual newsletter at an East Kwanzaa reunion.⁵⁴

The idea that some of the women involved in this study fostered an “irreplaceable sisterhood” may seem trivial. The black matriarch, Sapphire, and other popular stereotypes, however, remain pervasive. African American women have been generalized as rude, mean, treacherous, angry, bossy, and unable to trust or work with others.⁵⁵ Real-world examples of black women’s cooperation are important for fostering leadership models for females, especially as present-day activists in the fight for liberation, justice, and equality draw upon historical

⁵¹ Hill, interview.

⁵² Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82.

⁵³ This quote is from Martha Bright, who said that the highpoint of being in The East was the women’s “irreplaceable East sisterhood.” Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014.

⁵⁴ Abimbola Wali, Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014; Bright, interview, part 2 of 2; “The East . . . Remembering a Wellspring.”

⁵⁵ Steven Herro, “Representation of African American Women on Reality Television after the Great Recession,” Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 2015; Donnetrice C. Allison, *Black Women’s Portrayals on Reality Television: The New Sapphire* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), xxi, 83 & 127.

examples to shape their own organizing. Emphasizing these details is in no way meant to mask underlying discord and vitriol among various individuals and organizations. In particular, the groups that were largely networks of blood and marital relations fragmented when families dissolved.⁵⁶ Rickford and others have examined such issues, including the “two-line” struggle, which took the form of a hostile ideological conflict between advocates of various tendencies ranging from African socialism to Marxism.⁵⁷ This dissertation is partially aimed at emphasizing the idea that effective leadership requires the ability to privilege teamwork, and cultural-nationalist women’s models of *kazi* leadership exhibited the power of what they believed to be “collective work and responsibility.”

Some of Jaribu Hill’s fond memories highlighted the demanding aspects of the Black Freedom Struggle and how they shaped her into what can be defined as a *kazi* leader. “I learned how, as a woman, I could use my voice to provide leadership, to provide guidance, to provide friendship and sisterhood,” Hill asserted. She also mentioned that, through the organizations, she learned to “challenge some of the stark representations of chauvinism and male domination or patriarchy.” She saw her time in CFUN and the related CAP united front organization as a turning point during which she grew to embody a “revolutionary” kind of womanhood. Once women in CFUN agitated to broaden their roles beyond the realm of social organization, Hill went on to state, they took on various tasks like running for office, working on political campaigns, and leading demonstrations. Women participated in the “theoretical work” and intellectual life of the organization as well, said Hill.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Joshua-Jasmine, interview.

⁵⁷ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 235.

⁵⁸ Hill, interview; Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation*, 123-124; Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82-84; Farmer furthermore asserts women not only participated in CAP’s theoretical life, but that they also altered it. Farmer, “Renegotiating the ‘African Woman,’” 76.

Hill continued, specifying the types of opportunities impacting her development in CAP. She and many other women in the organization were able to organize workshops, moderate political discussions, and engage in other such leadership activities. She further described her exposure to politics through what has been called an ambitious African-American attempt to form a third political party. Hill said, “Through the National Independent Black Political Party, we were able to work as activists and organizers and were treated with a sense of equality and respect. We sat at tables with Shirley Chisolm and Charles Diggs and Richard Hatcher.” Hill emphasized that both Amiri and Amina Baraka fostered such opportunities so women and men in the organization could be a part of developing the internal framework for key political organizations and interacting with nationally-known African American leaders.⁵⁹

Building on her politicized performances with the Spirit House Movers and Players in Newark, Hill went on to compose and perform “contemporary freedom music” with her husband as part of the folk duo, Serious Bizness, in 1978.⁶⁰ Working as a union organizer and adult educator for a time, she later attended CUNY School of Law. Upon graduating in 1995, Hill received the prestigious Skadden Fellowship to support advocacy work which took her to Mississippi. The following year Hill founded the Mississippi Workers’ Center for Human Rights, which focuses on advocating, organizing and providing training for impoverished workers and their families. The workers’ center frames issues from exploitative pay to racism in the context of human rights violations.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Hill, interview.

⁶⁰ Ngoma and Jaribu Hill, *For Your Consideration!*, Serious Bizness, 1982, Folkways Records FW05520, liner notes.

⁶¹ Herb Boyd, “Jaribu Hill: Working for Workers,” *The New York Amsterdam News* (October 22-28, 2009), 5: *The Mississippi Workers’ Center for Human Rights*, accessed October 8, 2016, <http://themiississippiproject.weebly.com/>. Amina Baraka discussed her desire to support other women through such work as developing the Black Women’s United Front and supporting the leadership of such women as Akiba and Jaribu, who served as second chair of the

As outlined in Chapter Five of this dissertation, Aminisha Black and Martha Bright also had life-altering experiences, but theirs took place through The East. Black further emphasized that other women experienced The East as an incubator for valuable skills, which they would use in their future roles as community educators, organizers, and administrators. Black wrote that Isoke Nia Kierstedt received teacher training and spent a decade as an *Uhuru Sasa* educator after reading about the school in *Black News* and enrolling her daughter. Kierstedt eventually became director of research and development for the Columbia University Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and the founder of a literacy consulting organization.⁶² Black wrote about several other women, who served in various capacities after their time at The East, from public educators and higher-education professionals to proprietors of independent institutions, some of which still exist. Fela Barclift opened Little Sun People Early Childhood Development and Little Sun People Too!, both in Brooklyn. Ayanna Johnson is the founder of *Weusi Shule* in Brooklyn's Crown Heights, now known as Johnson Preparatory School."⁶³

The issue of women's leadership in the realm of education is important. Radio show host Dwight Brewster pointed out the importance of cultural-nationalist women's guidance of independent and supplementary black educational pursuits, stating that women in The East helped develop institutions that were precursors to charter schools.⁶⁴ Rickford also highlighted

CFUN women's division, and Malaika Ibura, who was a leader in the African Free School. Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; "Education for Liberation Conference Held Here," *Black New Ark*, November 1972, 1; Photograph, *Black New Ark*, October 1973, 2.

⁶² Staff Development Workshops, Inc., accessed July 16, 2016, <http://www.sdworkshops.org/presenters/isokenia.shtml>.

⁶³ "The East . . . Remembering a Wellspring."

⁶⁴ Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014.

African-Americans' enthusiasm for charter schools partially as a theoretical and practical outgrowth of the 1960s and 1970s independent education movement.⁶⁵ Black Power advocates have, nonetheless, fundamentally disagreed over the nature and meaning of charter schooling and other elements of the school choice movement.

Many activists viewed the movement as “politically conservative,” ultimately corrupted by hostile interests including “corporate multiculturalism.”⁶⁶ Some women who were active in the independent and supplementary school movement to build what Rickford referred to as “parallel structures” through the more left-leaning Pan-African nationalist organizations argued the idea that reformed public schools were the most pragmatic method of educating the masses of black students. Given the fact that most students were publicly educated, left-leaning Pan-African nationalists opposed mechanisms that funneled resources away from public schools in need of monetary support.⁶⁷

Former CFUN advocate Jaribu Hill spoke to such educational issues in her narrative. “I have issues with charter schools,” Jaribu Hill said. “I don’t think you can compare a freedom school that was operating because there was very little available for people of color . . . to what we’re seeing now with the charter schools literally sucking resources out of the public school system, a system that’s broken and has been broken,” she explained. Hill criticized charters because they “will only service a small amount of kids.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 4.

⁶⁶ Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 21; Amina Baraka stated that she believed black-nationalist IBIs were precursors to charter schools but expressed concern over government corruption and interference with the IBIs’ curricula and spending in Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012; Amina Baraka, interview, July 17, 2012.

⁶⁷ “Community Organizing” in Congress of African People organizing manual, 1972, Series V: Congress of African People, 1956-1986: Committee for Unified Newark (CFUN), 1960-1976, Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka Collection, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Atlanta, GA; Amina Baraka, interview, July 13, 2012.

⁶⁸ Jaribu Hill, interview.

From another perspective, school-choice initiatives give parents opportunities to access good schools for their children, not merely those who can afford private schools or who live in affluent areas. The financial apportionments attached to charters have been attractive for cash-strapped IBI operators. Whatever the point of view, female advocates of Pan-African nationalism have demonstrated leadership in the school choice movement. For instance, education and social policy professor, Carol D. Lee (Safisha Madhubuti) developed an independent black educational institution along with her husband, poet Haki Madhubuti. The school, called New Concept Center, opened in 1972 in an economically-marginalized, crime-ridden, majority-black South Side neighborhood in Chicago and was a unit of the *Kawaida*-influenced Institute of Positive Education. New Concept became a charter school in the 1990s, eventually expanding to three campuses, the Betty Shabazz, Barbara Sizemore, and DuSable Leadership Academies. Despite facing an uphill battle with serving the needs of its student body in terms of achieving academic benchmarks and maintaining charters, community members praise school administrators, faculty, and staff for instilling pride and self-esteem in children who face daily race and class struggles.⁶⁹

Similarly emphasizing African Americans' basic right to culturally-relevant, self-determined education, former Pittsburgh CAP member Tamanika Howze discussed her post-1980s work in Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools. Freedom Schools are supplementary institutions aimed at grooming college-aged servant leaders to spark a passion for literacy, learning, and social action in primary and middle-school students. Inspired by SNCCs example, Marian Wright Edelman resurrected the Freedom School mission through the CDF's

⁶⁹ Gary Rivlin, "Eyes on the Prize," *Reader* (Chicago), May 23, 1997, 1 & 20; John Eligon, "Poor Scores Leave an Afrocentric School in Chicago Vulnerable," *New York Times*, February 28, 2016, online, ProQuest Newspapers; Rickford, *We Are and African People*, 144; Simanga also notes Safisha Madhubuti as a female leader, but frames her work within the legacy of CAP programmatic expressions of self-determination and self-sufficiency. Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, 82 & 107.

Black Community Crusade for Children in 1995. Howze directed Kingsley-Lincoln Freedom School in Pittsburgh, one of more than sixty nationwide CDF Freedom Schools. Still emphasizing culture as an indispensable component of an effective educational process, the children's days at Freedom Schools began with African dance, drumming, and "*Harambee* time."⁷⁰ Howze has carried on the legacies of Pan-African cultural nationalism as a community leader. She specifically employed aspects of *Kawaida* among other the tenets of figures from Ella Baker to Malcolm X in a syncretic way, delivering important life lessons to serve Pittsburgh-area students.⁷¹

Howze undertook administrative work in Freedom Schools to help combat the educational and economic disparities that remained entrenched in her community and her work reflects the tenets of *kazi* leadership in this way. As an education advocate, "Freedom School ambassador," and antiwar agitator she has continued the types of activities in which she engaged during her CAP years.⁷² For instance, she organized events aimed at raising awareness about the challenges many low-income residents of Pittsburgh faced and educating and assisting them with

⁷⁰ Tamanikah [sic] Howze, "Freedom Summer School: The Freedom Summer Died with the 1960s While Poverty and Illiteracy Remained. Now the Program Has Been Retooled and Resurrected," *Pittsburgh City Paper*, July 31, 2003, accessed September 26, 2014, <http://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/freedom-summer-school/Content?oid=1335349>; Sonya M. Toler, "Malcolm's Legacy Still Lives On," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 16, 2005, A1; Tamara Hall, "Freedom School Teaches Self Pride for Brighter Futures," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, City Edition, December 21, 2003, KA10; Daveen Rae Kurutz, "Summer Program at Kingsley Lincoln Freedom School Adds African Culture," *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*, July 9, 2009, accessed October 29, 2016, <http://triblive.com/x/archive/1231011-74/archive-story>.

⁷¹ Toler, "Malcolm's Legacy Still Lives On," A1.

⁷² Kingsley Freedom School newsletter, June 24-June 28, 2013, accessed October 7, 2016, <http://kingsleyassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/6-24-Newsletter.pdf>; Charles N. Brown, "Supporters Get on the Bus for Education: Group to Lobby for Harrisburg for Funds," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 1, 2001, A1; Treshea N. Wade, "Paintball Event to Raise Funds for Hill Playground," *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, May 17, 2000, A1; Rebecca Nuttall, "Hill District Education Council Empowers Parents," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, November 16-22, 2011 A1 & A4; Renee P. Aldrich, "'Cost of War' in the Black Community," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 6-12, 2013, A1 & A3.

the process of accessing social services.⁷³ As a member of the NAACP education committee, she assisted with monitoring African American students' performance in Pittsburgh schools.⁷⁴ She was cited in 2004 as an individual who made a significant impact on education.⁷⁵ Howze was at the forefront of reviving Pittsburgh's 1960s *Harambee* Black Arts Festival as its coordinator in the 1980s and early 1990s. Hailed in 2001 for having been a promoter of Black Consciousness for more than a decade, she continued to focus on transnational, Pan-African issues in her advocacy.⁷⁶

Historians have pointed out that Pan-African cultural nationalists' methods and models inspired the establishment of multiple institutions and organized activities, many of which were woman led. Women would also employ some of the skills they acquired in Pan-African cultural nationalist organizations as community leaders.⁷⁷ For instance, Tayari kwa Salaam and Carol Bebelles formed VITAL in 1988. The New Orleans-based venture was an annual seven-week summer supplementary education program that took an interdisciplinary approach to math, science, history, literacy, the arts, and culture. VITAL lasted for a decade, resurrecting some of the effective methods from Ahidiana Work/Study Center while questioning and discarding others.⁷⁸ In the Organization Us, Subira Kifano continued to be a leader in her community as

⁷³ Rebecca Nuttall, "Kids Rally for National Health Care," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, July 22-28, 2009, A5.

⁷⁴ Marcella Lee, "Community Update, NAACP: Here and Now, Music Videos Outrageous," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, City Edition, January 11, 2004, A7.

⁷⁵ "Others Who Were Nominated," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 20, 2004, accessed October 29, 2016, <http://www.post-gazette.com/frontpage/2004/10/20/Others-who-were-nominated/stories/200410200343>.

⁷⁶ Genea L. Webb, "Economic Independence: The 21st Century Struggle, Activist Nkomo Says South Africa, U.S. Should Partner," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, City Edition, September 22, 2001, B2.

⁷⁷ Konadu cited Ujamaa Institute, Little Sun People, Weusi Shule (Johnson Preparatory), Zidi Kuwa, Shule ya Mapenduzi, Imani Day School Computer Campus, and Black Veterans for Social Justice. Konadu, *A View from The East*, 133; Rickford, *We Are an African People*, 262.

⁷⁸ Tayari kwa Salaam, "Sojourning," 116-117.

assistant director of the African American Cultural Center and in her position as a public speaker lecturing on black history. After she left the group in 1997, she continued to promote the observance of Kwanzaa and win awards for her acumen as an educator.⁷⁹

9.4 Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study. This work relied heavily on oral histories. Some of major shortcomings of the work, therefore, were aligned with the general issues of conducting oral histories. The faultiness of memory was a primary issue. Some advocates' stories did not align with other narratives that they told at different times. Additionally, I was unable to interview several important women involved in *Kawaida* cultural nationalism, particularly those in the Us Organization. I, therefore, approached using oral history to analyze the nature of advocates' memories themselves, not the accuracy of their claims. I acknowledge that there is much more work to be done in crafting a more balanced history.⁸⁰

Other issues were related to primary sources, which were unevenly distributed among the groups included in the study. *Black News* was both helpful and problematic. It was a valuable source because many of the women wrote for, edited, printed and distributed the circular. *Black News*, however, did not become the official organ of The East until October 1969. It is, nevertheless, necessary to examine the paper with a cautious eye because it was a publication

⁷⁹ "Lock-In Draws over 250 Youth," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 9, 1989, C12; "NCNW Honor Nation's Finest Educators," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), November 7, 2001, 14; "Black Agenda Tells of Upcoming Kwanzaa Fete," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 2, 1993, C2; Tracy Conner, "Kwanzaa! Celebrating Seven Principles of Self-Help," *Atlanta Daily World*, December 14, 1993, 1; "Millions Celebrated Kwanzaa This Year," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 6, 1995, 3D.

⁸⁰ See the Methodology Appendix for more information on the use of oral history in crafting this dissertation project.

reflecting articles by and about community members, some of whom were not aligned with The East and its guiding philosophies even after 1969.⁸¹

The lack of archival records posed another major challenge to the study. In a sense, the process of constructing this dissertation was an intuitive exercise in the best practices of, not only interrogating the conception of unvaryingly silent, and passive cultural-nationalist women in Black Power literature, but conversely, of waylaying the stereotype of “bossy” matriarchs. Women’s activism and leadership were limited in the context of a movement that sought racial empowerment through bolstering black manhood. This meant centering black males as leaders and sidelining African-American females as “completers.” The pattern of privileging cultural-nationalist men’s movement work was unfortunately reflected in the archival record and, thus, sources highlighting women’s strategizing and initiatives were scant.

In hindsight, I have realized that studying the women involved in *Kawaida*-influenced cultural-nationalist organizations required similar techniques as those outlined in the recent “Ban Bossy” campaign, which was aimed at fostering equitable leadership abilities among girls and boys. Organically mirroring core tenets of the campaign, while also being mindful of intersectionality, this dissertation was an exercise in “cultivating gender equity” in the historical record. This work required mining existing sources in an effort to seek voices beyond the core body of movement spokespeople. Oral history methods encouraged females to speak up and prompt us to “say their names.”⁸²

⁸¹ Aminisha Black in Angela Weusi et al., interview, October 11, 2014; Konadu, *A View from The East*, 68.

⁸² “Say their names” is a take on Kimberle Crenshaw’s #sayhername campaign, which publicizes the need to to highlight black female victims of police violence. “Say their names” is also a reference to Amina Baraka’s claim about women and girls who were advocates of cultural nationalism—that “nobody knows our names.” #sayhername, accessed November 17, 2016, <http://www.aapf.org/sayhername/>; Amina Baraka, interview, July 12, 2012.

Results of this study indicated common group dynamics as noted in “Ban Bossy” classroom observations. Females often took over essential, undesirable, or incomplete projects. In many cases, the women received little or no credit for doing such important work at the time. Females’ routine performance of such tasks without ample recognition became an institutionalized practice. Despite the threat of being labeled with common stereotypes, such as behaving in an emasculating manner, some women in *Kawaida* influenced-organizations exhibited the courage to challenge their unequal status. For this, I am labeling their particular model *kazi* leadership. My ultimate hope is that this study encourages archivists, teachers, scholars, activists, and organizers of programs and institutions not to stereotype, sideline, or devalue the work commonly assigned or left to any marginalized individuals and groups, but to engage in practices that foster collaboration and equity.⁸³

This study also suffered from a dearth of women’s autobiography and memoir. Black Freedom Struggle autobiography and memoir generally focuses on women affiliated with the BPP and SNCC. McDuffie and Woodard, however, have indicated the need to take black women’s ideas seriously in terms of fully developing historical narratives about individuals and eras. Women’s narratives add richness and complexity to interpretations of the past. My study contributes to a body of work that discusses cultural-nationalist women, largely through oral histories, but my guiding questions would have been greatly enriched by the women’s own autobiographies and memoirs. More accounts of their work and ideas from their own perspectives should provide greater texture and a more complete picture of our past. Activists’ self-narratives are particularly important because they perform a kind of cultural work. Margo

⁸³ For more information on the “Ban Bossy” campaign and scholarship on equitable pedagogical methods, see “Ban Bossy,” Teacher Tips, accessed August 8, 2016, <http://banbossy.com/teacher-tips/>; Bailey, S (1992) *How Schools Shortchange Girls: The AAUW Report*. New York, NY: Marlowe & Company.

Perkins has indicated that the narratives help current activists see their own communities as “projects of possibility.”⁸⁴ Tamanika Howze said it best when she stated in her oral narrative, “The thing we tend not to do is to tell our story and that’s so important.”⁸⁵ Without the self-reflections of involved women, we do not understand the story of Pan-African cultural nationalism and its legacies.

9.5 Areas for Future Research

The recurring theme of family in the narratives also included memories of children as indispensable to the goals of institutional and community development as well as nation building. An article headline and a CFUN birth rite seemed to both illustrate this belief. The words “our youth will build our nation” were written above an East-related news article and the CFUN ritual proclaimed, “Children are life after death, the only way we can live is through children and great works.”⁸⁶ It is, therefore, not surprising that the women involved in this study often described their offspring as living legacies in their narratives. They suggested that their daughters and sons were among the greatest results of their organizing efforts. That Black Power bore fruit in 1990s Afrocentricity reveals the significance of organizing that protects and supports young people but also allows them to express their own viewpoints and concerns about

⁸⁴ Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism*, xii-xiv.

⁸⁵ Tamanika Howze, interview.

⁸⁶ “The East . . . Remembering a Wellspring”; Committee for Unified NewArk, “Ritual Celebrating the Birth of Our Children,” n.d., Komozi Woodard Amiri Baraka collection, reel 1, slide 824; The CFUN Mumininas emphasized the importance of children as constituents of the nation becoming, which might partially explain their emphasis on children as an outcome of their activism; Emphasis on grooming a second generation and the legacy work young advocates undertook was not just evident in women’s stories, but the theme also surfaced in the narratives of cultural-nationalist men. Shabaka, interview; Walker, interview.

the ideologies and methods of the Black Liberation Struggle.⁸⁷ Future studies should investigate youth and childhood in Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations, particularly inquiring about advocates involved in Afrocentric institution building and development a generation after their parents, teachers, and mentors. Although there is a growing body of literature on young people and the Black Freedom Struggle, more work needs to be done to capture the insight and experiences of youthful students and advocates of cultural nationalism. Further, researchers should also investigate the role of spirituality in advocates' ideologies, activism, organizing, and personal choices. Several women critiqued the nature and the lack of spirituality in certain nationalist organizations.⁸⁸

Female advocates of cultural nationalism navigated and challenged patriarchy, but they obviously did not abolish it. The 2016 presidential race involved the first major-party female presidential nominee in the United States contending with an openly racist, xenophobic, and misogynistic white male candidate, who was ultimately elected to office. There have been no women presidents of the United States to date. Related discourses and outcomes highlight the fact that patriarchy is still deeply embedded in American society. To make matters more complicated, the election again revealed limitations, fallacies, and fault lines in feminism. Critiques of black nationalism additionally cite the movement as stubbornly masculinist. In the dominant culture and in black-nationalist subcultures, leadership is still often claimed as the domain of heterosexual males by default and white women are often viewed as privileging race and class allegiances over loyalty to a putative diverse sisterhood of folks fighting for women's

⁸⁷ The numbers of Afrocentric schools flourished in the 1990s. Kifano, "Promise," 49; For more information on youth experiences in Pan-African Nationalism, see Asantewa Sunni-Ali, "Performing New African Childhood: Agency, Conformity, and the Spaces in Between" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University 2014).

⁸⁸ Amina Thomas, interview; Nana Anoa Nantambu, interview; Safiya Bandele, interview.

equality. In the face of continued conflicts over culture, identity, equality, and freedom, this study has shown that women like those in Black Power-era *Kawaida*-influenced Pan-African cultural nationalist organizations impacted policies, ideologies, and group structures. Their approaches to extant circumstances that more cooperative models of leadership are quite necessary and possible. One of the great lessons of *kazi* leadership is that people other than heterosexual men can and will find the courage to lead, even in the most difficult of circumstances, whether or not others formally recognize or reward their work.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Glossary

Ahidian. To make a promise or pledge to other people.

arusi. Wedding ceremony.

balozi. Administrator; consul; ambassador; high commissioner; minister; political agent.

chakula. To eat.

darasa. Class, lesson, or classroom.

elimu. Education. *Elimu* was the name of an important education work council in CAP.

habari. News.

harambee. Self-reliance. Let's work together.

hekalu. (1) A Kiswahili word meaning, "temple." (2) Affiliate of the national temple (i.e. the physical location) of the Us Organization, which was "The Hekalu." CFUN was such a *hekalu* and Amiri Baraka carried title of *Imamu*. Named Hekalu Umoja, it was at 502 High Street, Newark, NJ.

imamu. (1) A Kiswahili word meaning "priest"; (2) A Muslim leader; (3) A high priest or spiritual leader in *Kawaida* who led the spiritual arm of Us or who headed a local *hekalu*.

imani. Faith, or the seventh *Nguzo Saba* principle.

jamaa. Family, community, or relatives.

karamu. Feast.

Kawaida. (1) Usual, normal, or regular thing, ordinary, everyday, habit. (2) Standard, rule, or regulation.

kazi. Work.

kobe. Turtle or tortoise.

kujichagulia. Self-determination, the second *Nguzo Saba* principle.

kuumba. Creativity, the sixth *Nguzo Saba* principle

Kwanzaa. The first fruits celebration from December 26 to January 1. The Us Organization spelled the Kwanzaa celebration with two *a*'s to differentiate it from the term *kwanza*, which means 'first.' The use of seven letters was also meant to accommodate the seven principles and

the initial seven children of the Us organization. CFUN and East Kwanzaa advocates sometimes spelled the word with one “a.”

Malaika. (1) Good spirit or angel. (2) Adolescent girls, young, or unmarried woman in *kawaida*-influenced organizations.

Matamba. Women’s group mobilized for paramilitary functions in the Us Organization during “The Crisis” period beginning in the early 1970s and in which Us faced increasing repression. Scot Brown asserts their existence reflected changes in gender roles.

Maulana. Master, lord, or master teacher.

mavazi. Clothes.

Muminina. (1) A Kiswahili word meaning “true believer.” (2) A woman who was a committed advocate in a *Kawaida*-influenced organization, a step above *Malaikas*.

Mwalimu. Teacher.

Nguzo Saba. The seven principles. Also, the seven principles of Blackness or of *Kwanzaa*. A basic moral value system for African Americans. The Nguzo Saba are: *umoja* (unity); *kujichagulia* (self-determination), *ujima* (collective work and responsibility); *ujamaa* (cooperative economics); *nia* (purpose); *kuumba* (creativity); and *imani* (faith).

nia. Purpose, the fifth *Nguzo Saba* principle.

salimu. A *Kawaida* greeting in which women crossed their arms over their chests and bowed slightly when men went by.

shule. School.

Simba or Simba Wachanga. (1) Lion and young lion respectively. (2) The *Simbas* were often the paramilitary formations of *Kawaida*-influenced organizations, which were composed of young males.

taifa saa. *Kiswahili* words meaning “nation” and “hour.” Advocates interpreted “*taifa saa*” to mean “nation time.”

tamu. Sweet.

Uhuru Sasa. Kiswahili for “freedom now.” Also the name of an East Organization school.

Uhuru. Freedom or independence.

ujamaa. Extended family, familyhood, cooperative economics, or socialism. The fourth *Nguzo Saba* principle.

ujima. Collective work and responsibility, the third *Nguzo Saba* principle.

umoja. Unity, the first *Nguzo Saba* principle.

umuzis. Named after the collective houses or villages of the Zulu. Amina Baraka's concept for collectives and semi-collectives in CFUN. *Umuzis* were used to foster communal living among advocates.

watu- (1) People. (2) WATU was also an acronym for the CAP St. Louis affiliate, Working Always Through Unity.

weusi- Black.

Appendix B: Methodology

This oral history project seeks to expand what is known about the ideas, motivations, backgrounds, and work of women who helped mold Kwaunda-influenced Pan-African cultural nationalism. Having come of age during the rise of 1990s Afrocentricity at an HBCU devoted to women's education, I dedicated my scholarship to producing knowledge that illuminates African-descended people's experiences with a particular focus on female perspectives. I have researched various forms of black nationalism for two decades. I have grown increasingly concerned with notions of how women perceived and negotiated gender roles within organizations intended to bring about black liberation, as many were also patriarchal. Additionally, my research revealed there is more to be done in terms of expanding the archive and literature on black-nationalist women and youth. This dissertation was a result of both my interests and my academic experiences.

This study developed from a literature review essay Akinyele Umoja assigned for a graduate African American Studies Social Movements class at Georgia State University. Umoja helped me hone my topic as I sifted through scholarly works on female Black Power Movement activists. A review of the literature indicated a more robust discussion of women who could be

identified as revolutionary nationalists than those who might have been defined as cultural nationalists. Umoja, thus, pointed out that I could consider exploring the literature on women in Kawaïda organizations. A longtime scholar-activist with roots in south Los Angeles, he offered a short list of contacts for the dissertation project.

I generally used the snowball method to find additional narrators because it can be an effective technique for reaching marginalized and invisibilized populations.¹ In most cases, Umoja's initial contacts referred me to their friends and colleagues, and so forth. Additionally, I identified a few narrators by mining blog posts, news articles, and primary documents such as membership lists, which included the names of advocates. I searched for their current information through phone directories, contact lists, and even on social media sites like Facebook. Both the snowball method and data mining in newspapers and primary sources had possible shortcomings. Oral history is not focused on producing generalizable knowledge; however, it is meant to capture the individual viewpoints of narrators.² Still, it is worth noting that the group of participants developing from Umoja's original contact list may have generally remained sympathetic to Pan-African cultural-nationalist values, staying in relatively close contact with their activist associates and/or retaining the African and Arabic names they adopted during the movement. I did, however, speak with a number of critical or disgruntled narrators, and one in particular had completely disavowed cultural nationalism.

¹ Snowball sampling is the use of personal and professional networks to locate prospective participants. Narrators lead the researcher to other potential narrators in snowball sampling. Patricia Leavy, *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 34.

² Georgia State University Research Services and Administration, "Institutional Review Board Policies and Procedures for Faculty, Staff, and Student Researchers," June 2016, 41, accessed January 29, 2017, <http://ursa.research.gsu.edu/files/2016/02/Revised-IRB-Manual-Jan-2016.pdf>.

The initial list of potential narrators grew into a group of thirty-five participants. With various womanisms in mind, I developed the participant pool. I, therefore, included the oral histories of both female and male advocates in Kawaida-influenced nationalist organizations.³ I spoke with twenty-seven different women and eight men. Five of the thirty-five narrators had spent their childhood and adolescent years in the organizations. I labeled them “second-generation advocates.” Three of the second-generation advocates were females and two were males. I recognized that six people would not be considered a representative sample group in many respects. There is, therefore, more work to be done in terms of documenting second-generation advocates’ recollections.

The numbers of narrators from each organization varied. Ten of the narrators had been either core Ahidiana members or loose affiliates, nine were with the East, five with CFUN, and five were with other CAP affiliates in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. I was able to interview four Us and Kawaida Groundwork Committee advocates. I engaged in an in-person chat and a series of email messages with Tiamoyo Karenga, wife of Us founder Maulana. Our conversations, however, never progressed to a formal interview. Tiamoyo Karenga forwarded me information for several Us women, whom I emailed. I received no response from them. Moreover, I found out during the course of a particular interview that one additional narrator had been affiliated with the RNA and other Black Liberation Movement groups but had never joined the Us Organization as I had initially believed. Having grown up in Pasadena, California, where she befriended and worked with several Us members (including Maulana Karenga), she provided context and shared observations of group dynamics. Despite her

³ In this case, I am defining womanist methods as those concerned with centering women, and which are focused on black self-determination. Womanist approaches are also community focused in that they are concerned with the ideas and experiences for females and males as well as young people and elders. Alexander-Floyd and Simien, “What’s in a Name?”, 69.

contributions, this study lacks Us voices, a reality which I sought to overcome by using archived interviews and consulting the literature. Future studies should enlarge the archive of Pan-African cultural nationalists, particularly via published interviews of Us Organization advocates.

Arranging interviews with the advocates who had been in Kawaïda-influenced organizations in several major urban centers was a daunting task. In-person conversations would have been best for observing social cues during interviews. My funding was limited, however, and I covered many of my research expenses out-of-pocket. I was able to conduct less than one quarter of the interviews face-to-face in cities distant from my Atlanta residence. I did receive much-needed support from Atlanta Metropolitan State College in conducting archival research at the Schomburg Center, during which time I squeezed in New York City and Newark interviews. Additional funding from Georgia State University allowed me to travel to the Amistad Research Center in New Orleans, where I was able to arrange several meetings with Ahidiana advocates. I conducted ten additional face-to-face interviews within a ninety-mile radius of Atlanta with narrators who were living in or visiting Georgia. Institutional support and my residence in a hub of African-American life and activity, thus, enhanced my ability to conduct more than half of my total interviews (eighteen) in person.

I conducted the remaining sixteen interviews over the telephone. While the telephone interviews did not allow me to observe nonverbal cues, they were helpful in terms of bridging geographical distance and reducing travel costs. The audio quality of telephone interviews was acceptable, but not crystal clear. They were, nevertheless, clearer than some of the in-person interviews. I had less control over meeting spaces when I travelled than in my own city. I reserved quiet meeting rooms with my public library card for several of the Metro-Atlanta interviews. I did not have the same access to such services when traveling. Additionally, I had to

fit into narrators' busy schedules or accommodate their uneasiness with meeting me, a stranger, in private spaces. Unfortunately, I amateurishly surrendered good sound quality by conducting several interviews in loud cafés, homes, and business environments as narrators' everyday lives played out in the background.

Beyond the issue of obtaining interview spaces that would also address narrators' needs for security and accessibility, introducing myself was an ordeal in itself. I usually began with emails or a phone calls. In them, I explained my status as a doctoral student attempting to shed more light on the experiences and activism of women in cultural-nationalist groups from the 1960s through the 1980s. I stated the specific organization in which I was interested. I disclosed the individual who referred me. The potential narrators' movement had been targeted by state surveillance, so I worked to put them more at ease. Over time I began to include a picture of myself, more of my biographical information, and an overview of my dissertation project as my objectives became clearer.

I believe my "insider status" as an African-American female opened some potential narrators to the possibility of conversing and referring me to their colleagues and acquaintances. Further, I am sure my affinity for Pan-African cultural-nationalist ideals showed in my natural hairstyle, clothing choices, facility with names, and disclosures about the rites of passage program in which I had participated as a young person. I can also reflect on having been present in other aspects of my identity. I am sure I presented as an educated striver in my discussions about this or that collegiate experience. At other times, I mentioned the work I perform in my tenure at a southwest Atlanta community college (not far from the historical epicenter of SNCC's local campaign). I believe this way of discussing my career path partly reflected my devotion to struggling for the working class and poor.

My continued commitment to an aspect of “African womanhood,” one suggestive of cisgendered, heterosexual familyhood and sisterliness, must have also shown through the people who sometimes accompanied me on visits with narrators. My companions assisted with the recording equipment, helped with navigating unfamiliar streets, copiloted long-distance drives, and shared hotel expenses as well as invaluable reflections on the research. Sometimes my husband and our two daughters came with me. My team was comprised of two additional married mothers at other times. These ladies were Georgia State colleagues undertaking similar research on black cultural-nationalist beliefs and values. Afrocentric aesthetics and mannerisms marked everyone in my crew, whether in the form of names or by way of a well-worn dashiki, a colorful band of consecrated beads, or a red, black, and green t-shirt depicting a political message.⁴

I easily interacted with some narrators as familiar community mamas and babas, a kind of relationship that opened lines of communication but also shaped our interactions in ways that I have not yet fully come to terms with. Educated at two HBCUs, I had encountered some of the narrators’ children in the past. I had also bumped into friends of their friends and associates of their offspring during my matriculation. Many of those old acquaintances served as gatekeepers or touchstones in our conversations. My children played with narrators’ grandchildren during and after interview sessions, sharing meals and unspoken connections as young people with common experiences and upbringings. All such interactions must have increased narrators’ comfort levels with me. Still, more than one narrator openly scolded me for what they viewed as

⁴ Moses wrote about Afrocentrism as a “shorthand communication” of cultural and ideological affinities. He also stated that Afrocentricity could function as metaphorical “handshake,” telegraphing the idea that interested parties think somewhat similarly, although they have never met before. I came to believe that Moses’ theory was generally true over the course of this dissertation project. Moses, *Afrotopia*, 32.

my lack of understanding about a particular issue, suggesting that they viewed me as a neophyte outsider in certain ways.

Of course, there were other shortcomings and limitations to my position as a relative insider. Continued connections with a handful of participants via social media might indicate some viewed me as an insider to a certain extent. My Pan-African black-nationalist leanings, however, shaped my perspective and proximity to the topic to the point where I found it quite easy to fall back on an ingrained belief that I should not air black folks' "dirty laundry."⁵ I had approached the subject with an overall goal of thwarting historiographies of Black Power as a period of decline, and the warm reception many narrators extended increased my feelings of loyalty to them. I, thus, found it *very* emotionally taxing to listen to stories of intra- and intergroup conflict and to write about negative aspects of the movement. Furthermore, seemingly circumscribed conversations with certain potential narrators, declined phone calls, and unanswered email messages highlighted the realities of my "outsider" status, particularly among Us advocates. My physical distance from them hindered my ability to visit and spend time in their spaces, a reality which must have exacerbated the issue.

In the instances when participants agreed to an interview, I asked each narrator to sign a Release Form for Scholarly Research as part of the process. Release forms explained the purpose of my research, which was collecting and preserving reminiscences about women who affiliated with Pan-African cultural-nationalist activist organizations. I left out the term "Kawaida-influenced" because it invariably sparked a debate about whether the descriptor applied to the narrator's group. I also used the forms to seek narrators' consent for utilizing the information from their digital voice recording for teaching purposes, in scholarly publications and

⁵ Guy-Sheftall and Cole wrote about "airing dirty laundry," warning against the avoidance of grappling with multiple oppressions within African-American communities. Guy-Sheftall and Cole, *Gender Talk*, xxi & 73.

presentations, as well as in public applications such as radio or television broadcasts, blog posts, podcasts, and other digital media forms. Finally, the document informed the narrators that the words they spoke on the recording actually belonged to them and allowing me to digitally capture and utilize their oral narrative did not preclude their use of the interview. The form contained a space for narrators to place restrictions on my handling of their interviews. I verbally informed many narrators, for instance, that they could require me to redact sensitive information from their interview transcripts.

I encountered several issues with release forms and restrictions. Although most narrators did not indicate any restrictions, three people expressed desires to remain anonymous for various reasons, including fear of backlash. Additionally, it was quite difficult to get telephone interview participants to return signed release forms. I read the forms to them on the recordings and obtained verbal permissions; however, consent for using the conversation's content must be obtained in writing and signed by the narrator for archiving as well as for use in publications and public presentations.⁶ Another challenging aspect of obtaining consent was related to the use of movement names. Some narrators wanted to participate in the study only using their African or Arabic names. They vigorously objected to signing the release forms with their "government names." I have yet to solve the issue of using preferred names when the participant's legal name differs.

I interviewed narrators one to three times in sessions averaging an hour and twelve minutes each. I generally followed an interview guide for first-generation female participants,

⁶ Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2nd Edition (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2005), 122.

allowing time for narrators to expound on their ideas when they desired.⁷ The guide initially prompted me to ask narrators about biographical information ranging from names and birthplaces to their lives prior to affiliating with Pan-African cultural-nationalist organizations (see Appendix C). The second part of the guide was focused on the narrators' reflections on their time in a particular group. I asked basic information, such as the narrator's daily tasks. I also asked broader questions such as the most satisfying and challenging aspects of working with the group. Second-generation and male narrators were asked the basics about personal information and their time as advocates. I followed up by asking them what they remembered about the women in the group. Upon completion, I listened to the interviews, noting common themes and further grouping the narrator's comments into sub-topics. I hope the themes and sub-topics will shed more light on Pan-African cultural-nationalist women's memories and motivations. I drew from my review of the literature as well as ideologies of feminism, womanism, and Kwaiaida theory in the process of interpreting the oral history interviews.

Appendix C: Sample Interview Guide

Narrator's Name:

Date:

Location:

Biographical Information

- Name
- Birth, birthplace
- Mother's maiden name; father's name; siblings
- Birthplace of father and mother
- Father's work; mother's work
- Narrator's education

⁷ An interview guide provides topics for the researcher to discuss. This format allows the narrator to expound or suggest new topics and does not limit the interview to the list of subjects contained in the guide. Yow, 71.

- Historians are always looking for things in a person's childhood that influence their adult lives. Do you want to share any special remembrances (such as holidays, birthdays, vacations) which may have shaped who you are today?
- Favorite social events as an adolescent
- Married? (date, where met)
- Children? (names, date of birth)
- Life before organizations or activism

Work with Organization

- Name of your [organization] affiliate?
- Where was it located?
- How did [organization] relate to Kawaida?
- When did you begin your involvement with [organization]?
- How did you get involved [organization]?
- *What drew you to it [as opposed to a racial uplift group]?*
- What was your first role within the organization?
- What was it like in the organization when you first got involved?
- What offices did you hold in [organization], if any?
- What were your day-to-day tasks?
- What was it like being a female in [organization]?
- What are the most satisfying aspects of working with [organization]?
- What are the most challenging things about working with [organization]?
- Why did it dissolve?
- I'm interested in the legacy of the Black Power Movement. Do you believe [organization] is connected to that movement at all?
- What was [organization] legacy?
- What did you do differently as a result of being in the organization?

Additional Important Questions

- How do you feel about feminism? (Did that movement at all influence you? Do you think your beliefs about *Kawaida* influenced your feminism or womanism?)
- Please help me develop a timeline of how [event] happened.
- Where can I find more of the organization's literature? Do you know of items written by women?
- What did you do after leaving [organization]? What about the other women involved? Did you keep in touch with anybody?
- Can you suggest any contacts? Do you have any pictures you would mind sharing?

Appendix D: Release Form for Scholarly Research

RELEASE FORM FOR SCHOLARLY RESEARCH

In consideration of the work that Kenja McCray is doing as part of the Ph.D. program in history at Georgia State University to collect and preserve reminiscences about female activists, I give her permission to use the information from my digital voice recording in university-related papers and in scholarly publications or presentations.

I understand that my digital voice recording and any transcript made from it will be read and/or listened to by students and scholars. I know this may result in public presentations, including radio and television broadcasts and publication on websites and other forms of digital media.

Any listener or reader of the transcript of this recording should bear in mind that this is my spoken, not my written word. The agreement does not preclude any use that I may wish to make of the content or expressions contained in this recorded interview.

Signature of Narrator and Date

Signature of Interviewer and Date

Printed Name of Narrator: _____

Narrator is also known as: _____

Address, phone number, and any other relevant contact information of Narrator:

Restrictions: _____

